

CHRISTIANITY NEVER SURVIVED

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CHRISTIANITY NEVER SURVIVED

CHRIST OR THE CHURCH:
A PRESENT-DAY PROBLEM

by

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This book is dedicated to every man and woman who has a yearning to see the simple, early teachings of Christ, Buddha and Confucius revived in this world; to those who would see those simple, basic teachings forever divorced from the stagnating residue of pagan beliefs and formularies which now so completely obstruct the flow of the currents of truth and integrity between the oceans of the great religions of the world. With those obstructions blasted away, all peoples could stand upon a common ground and advance, side by side, toward that goal of the Brotherhood of Man—Peace on earth, Goodwill to all. Such is the goal of this book.

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CHRISTIANITY NEVER SURVIVED

Introduction

How DID I COME to write this book? Why did I write it? When those questions were first put to me I found that I was "stumped" for a ready answer. I had never asked them of myself.

I was reared in a religious home, and while my forebears for several generations had been engineers, nobody who knew me as a boy would have been surprised if later I had cast my lot with the clergy. I loved the rituals and mechanisms of my church with a fervor that was a joy both to my parents and my church. So one thing was certain; the seed for this work was not sown during my boyhood. Then when?

After the sciences, my first love was history, and most of my spare reading hours were spent with historical works. My first serious plunge into that subject concentrated upon the history of England and the British Empire for, in a way, that to me was practically the history of the modern world. It was there that I found the first small root-branch of this book.

Finding arrogance, treachery, tyranny and oppression in fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth century English monarchs did not surprise me any more than finding those same traits in a Medici or a Borgia; it was what I expected. But when I delved into the disputes between those tyrannical princes and the powerful Christian church, it became as plain as the print on this page that they were both "tarred with the same brush." The lust after power and wealth was common to both, and so all-consuming that there was no treachery, deceit or hypocrisy that either would not resort to in their political maneuverings to secure advantage, or promote an alliance. Nowhere was the hand of Christ visible. Every story was the exact antithesis of the "Way of Christ."

Those were the days when a pope might consider himself more powerful than a prince or a king, and the church had no intention of relinquishing any of its temporal or political power, regardless of what device or corruption it might have to resort to. Those were the days when countless thousands of hapless wretches chained to iron stakes died in flames, while the "Cross of Christ" was held tauntingly before their dimming eyes—all in His name and for His glory.

But in the study of Spanish, Portuguese and Italian history, the depths to which the political Christian church could sink—and did sink—were even more apparent. No narrations could possibly be less mindful of the Christ.

It was then that I really began to realize that, in religious matters, somebody else had always done my thinking for me. The stunning realization came that I didn't have a single religious idea that was really my own. Every last one, I knew, had been subtly planted in the void of my infant brain by my church or by my parents who, in their time, had been just as subtly impregnated. Wasn't it about time, I asked myself, that I began analyzing for myself some of those ridiculously absurd old dogmas which I had never thought of questioning? Where did those beliefs and rituals originate, anyway?

Many of them can be traced back reasonably close to their origins and may take one back to the earliest records left by man—records that antedate Christianity by thousands of years. I make no claim to having been initiated into the mysteries of astrology, theology or palmistry, or any other of the occult "sciences" but my Creator did endow me with a mind of my own and He must have intended that I use it. Certainly I could not come up with more ridiculous beliefs than those that pompous and arrogant theologians have been cramming down the throats of superstitious "Christians" over the centuries—some of which you shall encounter as you read this book.

And *your* religious beliefs; how many of those ideas can

you in complete sincerity claim as your own? Honestly, now! If any man could acquire the sum total of knowledge, that man could answer, with a simple Yes or No, the two questions this world would first ask: 1. Is there a life after death in which we shall retain our present identities? 2. Is there an intelligent and benevolent Creator?

To such a man there would be no such thing as "mystery." Acknowledgment of mystery is, therefore, merely acknowledgment of ignorance. If two hundred years ago a radio could have been concealed in a tree in the forest, and people had heard a voice coming out of the tree, even the most enlightened would have dropped to their knees to worship, and religious fervor would have approached a state of hysteria. That would have been a supreme mystery—but a mystery only because of ignorance.

Superstitious and unenlightened people the world over must have mystery; and mystery is greatly enhanced by rituals, mystic signs and figures, icons, pictures of supernatural beings, saints and spirits. It has always been so and always shall be as long as people refuse to think for themselves.

And that is orthodox religion. True Christianity would need none of it. It is plain that true *Christianity never survived*.

I don't know why it is that the religious never ascribe common-sense to God.

W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

CHAPTER 1

Is That Your Own Idea? Sure?

SINCE MAN CHISELED his first wedge-shaped characters on slabs of stone or tablets of clay, countless millions of words have been written, in scores of languages, on every conceivable phase of a hundred religions. Before that, primitive man endeavored to convey or perpetuate his beliefs through embryonic drawings on rocks and cavern walls. Crude sacrificial altars found among the rubble left by Neolithic man testify to the savage barbarism that characterized the rituals which probably gave the human race its first taste of communal, organized, or sacerdotal religion.

Although libraries, museums and religious orders hold more writings than could be read by anybody in a lifetime, probably the greater portion of what has been written over the ages, has been either lost or wantonly destroyed by those who feared that their tenets could not stand on their own merit against those expounded in the writings which they destroyed.

Considerable religious freedom is enjoyed in most civilized countries today, but through the last five millenia of recorded history such a condition has existed only over the past century, even in such freedom-loving countries as the United States and Great Britain. If it were not for the tyrannical control that most religions exercised over men's minds and the savagery with which they suppressed dissentient expression, the volume of religious writings would be much larger and more varied than it is.

We shall not go to such countries as India, the fountain-head of Buddhism, where adherents of that religion were so mercilessly persecuted until scarcely a Buddhist might be found in the entire country. This book is more concerned with the

Christian religion, which has probably suffered all the growing pains experienced by all the other religions combined. In it, we can find an example of almost any crisis or schism that mind can imagine.

A famous ethnologist once wrote that of all the ferocious beasts of the field none is so cruel as man; and on the other hand none can be as tender. This irrefutable truth can be fittingly applied to the Christian religion, as well as to other great religions. The simple teachings of Christ, Buddha and Confucius embraced nothing but kindness, mercy and goodwill toward all men. In their teachings was to be found a firm foundation for a perfect world.

On the other hand, the church that metamorphosed from Christ's teachings and became wealthy, politically powerful, and highly mechanized stands guilty of the same ferocious persecutions, savagery and rapine that come to mind with the mention of the names of Genghis Khan, Timour or Attila. None of these gentlemen was more barbarous, inhuman or rapacious in his conquests than were the Crusaders of the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries when, at the instigation of the Christian church and with its sanctioning of special indulgences, they attempted to wrest the Holy Land from the Mohammedan. No conqueror has a more foul blot on his escutcheon than those leaders of the various Christian crusades. Nor does all history record anything more hellish than Spanish Christianity of the fifteenth century under the domination of the Inquisition, to which we shall refer later. It matters not whether the driving force behind that inhuman organization was the insatiable greed of a Ferdinand or the maniacal piety of an Isabella, who, near the close of her life wrote: "In the name of Christ and His maid mother, I have caused great misery and have depopulated towns and villages, provinces and kingdoms." * The

* Great quantities of material have been compiled and published concerning the Inquisition, much of it highly documented by references to

Inquisition (which in the church was officially called the *Holy Office*) was—one hundred percent of it—an instrument of the church; completely under the jurisdiction of the church. Its organization and administration were almost exclusively in the Dominican order of the church and the church shared liberally in the plunder by confiscation from the wealthy Jews, the highly intelligent Moors, and other non-conformists.

Most unfortunately, not one Christian in a hundred has any knowledge whatever of the history and evolution of his own religion—much less that of other religions, some of which have completely perished, except insofar as many of their tenets were merged into and absorbed by a successor religion. The most that the devout Christian knows is the mechanical form his ritual has finally assumed, and in that he may be, and likely is, thoroughly grounded and indoctrinated. He knows the proper time to drop to his knee, make some ritualistic sign or repeat an approved phrase. He is a complete automaton actuated by creeds and beliefs which are not his own but were indelibly impressed upon his receptive infant brain at the time when it could accept with terrible and lasting finality the most fantastic myth as easily as the greatest truth. Complete emancipation from that early influence can never be his. And that is true for all races and creeds. It applies, even if in different degrees, to patriarch, pope or bishop; educated or uneducated; civilized man or jungle savage.

Perhaps there is actually such a thing as "brain washing." Perhaps some of the modern horror chambers have successfully

records still extant. But nobody was in a better position to supply factual data than the Spanish historian, Juan Antonio Llorente (1756–1823) who was, in 1782, vicar-general to the Bishop of Calahorra and in 1789, general secretary of the *Holy Office*. He had unrestricted access to the files of the Inquisition, so far as the Spanish organization is concerned, practically from the inception of the order in Spain, and he puts the exact number "burnt alive in Spain alone" by the Inquisition, at the staggering and horrifying total of 31,912.

eradicated deep-seated moral or political convictions and completely changed the personality of a victim so that he has come to loathe the ideas and ideals he once cherished. If so, they have achieved the same result that parents accomplish painlessly in filling the void of the infant brain where no preliminary "washing" is required. No intelligent person would think of denying that if the infant, who developed into a pious, militant, intolerant Christian had, a few weeks after birth, been adopted into a devout Mohammedan family, he would, instead, have become an intolerant, militant Mohammedan. The ideas, creeds and rituals he so strongly champions as a Christian would be repugnant and antagonizing to him as a Mohammedan.

If one should have the opportunity of asking of a group of persons (all apparently of equal native intelligence and education) this question: "To what religion did your parents belong?" one would invariably be right if one concluded that the person questioned subscribed to those same beliefs—the child of Mohammedan parents would proudly boast that he was a Mohammedan; the child of Catholic parents would be a Catholic; the child of Protestant parents would be a Protestant, and so on.

How sadly blinded otherwise clear thinking men can become! On the other hand, that an occasional ray of light may sometimes penetrate their reasoning was peculiarly demonstrated a few years ago when the *Spokane Daily Chronicle* invited the bishops of three churches, during the Christmas season, to contribute a column telling the reading public why they embraced the faiths they did. Their contributions appeared on three consecutive evenings. Two of these church leaders were quite obviously blind to or oblivious of the real reason for their adherence to their particular creeds, for neither mentioned the fact that he had been thoroughly indoctrinated while still a simple, impressionable child.

Refreshingly, however, the Episcopalian bishop began his column: "You ask me why I am an Episcopalian. That is an

easy question to answer. I'm an Episcopalian because my father and mother were Episcopalians."

But, as has already been said, *complete* emancipation from early influences can never be enjoyed. How far could this good man go in placing his early teachings and later biases under the pure, white light of totally unbiased reasoning?

We in the United States boast of the religious liberty we enjoy, but if the Christian church were again to find itself possessed of the temporal power it enjoyed in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, how much liberty would we be permitted? Stop for a moment and give the question some thought before you supply the answer. For example, how many churches have recently issued edicts prohibiting their members from attending religious services conducted by the evangelist, Billy Graham? Consider the defiant, militant words of a high-ranking churchman which follow. They happen to have been penned by a Catholic priest but could have been as easily spoken by the heads of other denominations. The statements were made by Father Phelan. They appeared in the *Western Watchman*. The date of publication was June 27, 1913:

"Tell us we are Catholics first and Americans afterwards; of course we are. Tell us in the conflict between the church and the civil government we take the side of the church; of course we do. Why, if the government of the United States were at war with the church, we would say tomorrow, 'To hell with the government of the United States!' * Why is it that

* That Jesuit world organ, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, wrote in a recent article: "The Roman Catholic Church, convinced through its divine prerogatives of being the only true Church, must demand the right of freedom for herself alone." Then it very magnanimously continues: "As to other religions the Church will certainly never draw the sword."

"A comforting thought," was the somewhat sarcastic comment of the Rev. J. A. Pike, Episcopal bishop of California, when apprised of the momentous decision. So let us not be too hasty in snatching that old squirrel gun down off its peg; we may yet be spared the horror of armed conflict between the United States and the Catholic Church.

in this country (the United States) . . . the Catholic church is so much feared? She is loved by her children and feared by everybody. . . . The pope is the ruler of the world. All the emperors, all the kings, all the princes, all the presidents of the world are as these altar boys of mine."

Perhaps Father Phelan had just recently been reading that declaration of the Council of Florence (1439) which reads: "We define the holy apostolic see and the Roman pontiff to have primacy over the whole earth." (As this church has never been in error—in fact cannot err—this statement was as applicable to the world in 1913 as it was in 1439, so Father Phelan could feel justified in his menacing exultation.)

Or consider one of the items, enunciated only this year in the Synod called by Pope John 23, (this is the first Synod held in the last 500 years) which was enjoined upon all Catholics and asserts: "Laymen may not attend non-Catholic church services or argue religion in public with non-Catholics."

This is not the voice of strength and righteousness speaking; it is the threatening voice of fear and insecurity. It stems from fear that man might come to think for himself; might have a ray of light thrown upon some old dogma that had its origin in the tyrannical paganism of 5,000 years ago. It is the same fear that has robbed us in the past of many priceless libraries and individual books through systematic destruction upon orders of the church. Undoubtedly there are Protestant denominations which would like to impose these same restrictions upon their flocks, but none has been brazen enough to express such a desire in any preponderantly Protestant country where no attempt would be tolerated by any state authority to control man's thinking.

There can be one reason only for arbitrary dictation and in-

But in all seriousness, never let anyone tell you that if the relative strengths of the parties were reversed, the threat of this politically ambitious church would not be very real.

tolerance—the church still clings to the dark-age craving to exercise complete domination over men's minds, just as the Chinese Communists now wish to control the minds of their subject hordes. They have an unholy dread that men might come to the place where they would want to do their own thinking; where they might want to weigh, without fear, one opinion against a conflicting opinion. Such a practice has always been a crime (heresy) in the Christian church. Whenever the church can control man's mind, it possesses a weapon more feared, by many—and more dangerous—than the secret police of the most oppressed and unenlightened countries—the fear of a savage God who, for some minor infraction of some dogma or jealously nurtured dictum would send the offender to eternal torment in His ancient torture dungeon—the Christian hell.

Yes, the firmest hold that many Christian churches still have upon their flocks is the creation of abject fear. The church is merely the physical expression of that bloated, intolerant monster we call theology, that "science" of mechanized religion.

A person may become so obsessed with any tenet that it will utterly destroy him and leave him incapable of reason; rob him of the ability to think rationally. It can turn a human being into a demon, as it has done to so many in the Christian church almost since its beginning. And these same demons are frequently the people who most easily can sway mobs, as for example, Hitler did in our own time.

Nothing is further from the thought behind this book than to try to picture any great religion as being completely and hopelessly shot through with corruption today. As it has already been said, most of them grew from healthy seed, but so many weeds have crept in at different times that the original plant is almost invisible in the rank growth. Unfortunate is the one who has not, somewhere along the way, known some kindly, gentle person—unfettered by priestly formularies—who had a simple faith that was the very essence of beauty. He may

have been an adherent of any of the great religions. He may have attended a denominational church or he may never have been inside one. It seems clear, therefore, that goodness is not the exclusive property of any church, or that it must conform to the mechanical ritual that has become so dear to modern, powerful and highly organized religions. Unlimited authority to control man's mind and do his thinking for him is tyranny at its worst, and some of the foremost churches demand, and actually possess that power—in religious matters—to a degree that even the Chinese Communists might envy.

Happily, in the Christian church at least, men can no longer be tyrannized by the application of physical punishment or the confiscation of their property, but countless numbers still suffer mental torture, or intimidation, at the hands of the church as; for example, the threat of everlasting punishment for failure to conform to some dictate of a church canon or dogma, or the threat of excommunication. These threats now substitute for the older whiplash of the scourger and few churches will hesitate to use them where there is any challenge to their sovereignty, their formulas, or their hand-me-down interpretations of creeds.

The author recently attended a funeral service in a large church where the bishop, in praying for the "departed soul" of the deceased, beseeched: "Gentlest heart of Jesus, be not severe in Thy judgments but let some drops of Thy precious blood fall upon the devouring flames."

Can any more absurd or incongruous reasoning be imagined? It is worth the reader's time to take a moment to analyze this prayer. Who kindled the "devouring flames"—whatever they are? Was it the "gentlest heart"? If so, why should that gentle heart repent and extinguish them? Was it upon the petition of some heavenly-deputized mortal skilled in the correct procedure for approaching and petitioning the "gentlest heart"? Or is this a prayer by one not far removed from the thinking that has

motivated all pagans in dealing with their satanic, vindictive gods?

Actually this prayer is just thoughtless, metaphorical nonsense; a literal picture is too gruesome to contemplate and puts us right back in the middle of the Inquisition. But if ever there was a pagan prayer, this is it, with all the fearful potential there to terrorize the living listener into faithfully and unquestioningly keeping in line with ancestral orthodoxy. Creedal religions, without exception, herd men to the corral to be inoculated against the ability to think for themselves, and in this they have been spectacularly successful. The way of Christ, which comprehended nothing but kindness, mercy and peace on earth, goodwill to all men didn't survive long after His death. True *Christianity never survived*. If men would emancipate themselves from the tentacles of pompous, degenerate and sterile theology, and begin to do their own thinking, it might be surprising to find on what common ground they would stand and it might not yet be too late to revive the simple "way of Christ" in this world.

Fission — Old Stuff in the Christian Church

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
 Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument
 About it and about: but evermore
 Came out the same door where in I went.

SO WROTE OMAR KHAYYAM after his unsated quest for truth in which his keen, unfettered mind was earnestly striving to equate ponderous theology to something that common sense would not reject. But this book has no intention of entertaining "great argument," or in fact any argument. It will not consider any of the colossal, unanswerable questions that caused the great schisms, splitting the early Christian church right down the middle—or those lesser ones which have since inflicted multiple fractures in those first subdivisions—other than, perhaps, to mention some of them and let the reader take on from there. Unfortunately no Bellerophon has come forward to slay those chimeras that have devastated the Christian church as the original fabulous monster devastated ancient Lycia. Every sectarian group claims to control the true and the only road that doesn't lead to *eternal* damnation. On this point they are all positive. Each possesses the *true faith*, and for the man whom they have succeeded in thoroughly inoculating against the power to think for himself, there is no hope of rescue. The monsters who directed the Inquisition were so inoculated.

What were some of those disputes that wrapped their tentacles about the throat of the simple, early church?

The most devastating one—which split it into the Greek and Roman (or Eastern and Western) divisions—revolved around the question of the relationships existing between the persons of the Trinity and their hypostatical properties. The final “bust” came in the year 1054 when two ambitious political parties in the church agreed to disagree on the question of whether the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father alone or from the Father and the Son. (I have never read or heard anything remotely resembling an intelligent definition for the “Holy Ghost”). Father, Son and Holy Ghost, it seems to be agreed, are three distinctly separate persons, but ONE Godhead. But, if we mortals must be able to trace the procession of the Holy Spirit before it reaches us, then they might as well padlock the gates and remove the keeper because there will be no great clamour for admittance. It would not be a bit more absurd, or less important, if the question had been whether the three *persons*, (The Council of Alexandria, AD 362, defined hypostasis as synonymous with “person”) in their home in Heaven, sat down to the same dinner table together. The original question, however, sounds much more erudite and towers far above the mental capacity of the pitiful proselyte such as you and I. However, as I promised the reader, if he wants to resolve this question, he must carry on from here but I should warn him that all the omniscient and ostentatious theologians of the past sixteen centuries haven’t settled it yet, and the two great branches have swapped mutual excommunications with one another over it.

Another great schism developed over the controversy of whether the Virgin Mary should be called the “Mother of God.” Mary was a human being and that God should be born of a human being is impossible, reasoned Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople from 428 to 431, (the same problem as which came first, the chicken or the egg) and so the great Nestorian sect was born.

These disputes in the Christian church invariably brought

with them inhuman savagery in dealing with the nonconformist. A score of books might be written relative to this one controversy alone, but again the reader will have to carry on for himself if further interested. These two examples are given merely to show the absurd questions the church can and will fight over and split over. Every such controversy makes heretics of all concerned because each faction is guilty of heresy in the eyes of the other, and there are few persons who are not, in a small way at least, cognizant of what heresy meant, in the application of savage punishment to countless thousands through the torture of the lash, mutilation, burning at the stake—all an inseparable phase of Christianity as it has been; all done in the name of Christ and for His glory.

Has the last of this type of brawl been witnessed? Of course not; and so long as there remains ambitious, intolerant orthodoxy, the end will never come. I believe a controversy presently exists in the Catholic church as to whether Mary was taken bodily to Heaven. Anybody who has any knowledge of the history of the Christian church should know what the decision will be, and anybody who will dare to dispute that finding will be guilty of heresy. But this time, with the fangs of the church pulled, and its temporal power reduced to impotency, thousands of victims will not cry out as flames envelop wretched bodies chained to the iron stake as, I can assure you, beyond the shadow of any doubt, would have been the order of the day any time in church history up to the sixteenth century, or later.

Bishop, priest, minister, rabbi: it matters not, most are so thoroughly saturated with tradition, inherited and unquestioned creeds, and iron-bound formularies that they are nothing more than automatons groping their way aimlessly through a forest so dark, tangled and impenetrable that few have ever ventured into it without becoming hopelessly lost and mentally emaciated.

But this book is not going to dare to take you into this jungle. We shall, however, take an occasional close-up look at some of the decaying trees that make up this forest and perhaps, in that way, learn more about this wilderness than all the theologians have learned in thousands of years.

What are some of these trees? To list a few we might mention: formal and stilted prayers, miracles, rituals (many of them antedating Christianity by centuries), sacrifice and pagentry—to name a few.

CHAPTER 3

The Tree Called Prayer— A Close-up View

WHAT IS PRAYER? True prayer is the "soul's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed."

Is there any justification for reposing faith or confidence in prayer?

Without doubt or reservation I answer, "Yes, in certain types of prayer and under certain conditions."

The poet had made some shrewd observations when he wrote: "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."

Yes, I believe in prayer, providing the petitioner has implicit and unquestioning faith. It may be blind faith in Jehovah, in Allah, or Buddha, or the Great Manito, or in the witch doctor, but if one has that faith, one can "move mountains." If a man believes that he has been given strength to accomplish something he is likely to accomplish it *by his own fortified strength*.

But such a prayer is greatly different from another type wherein one prays for something utterly beyond any form of human control, such as praying that the name of a loved one will not be among the list of names of those lost at sea with the death of a noble passenger liner.

Thus we find at least two distinct types of prayer—as widely separated as east is from west—the one subject to being brought to reality by the superhuman strength and will power of the petitioner himself; the other being utterly beyond the bounds of human control. But both prayers may come from the heart

with equal fervor—if the suppliant has been properly indoctrinated.

A third form of prayer is the mechanical prayer which includes such prayers as the patriotic-thing-to-do type; the slide-rule, precision type that is done at exact, specified intervals, or done kneeling or facing in an approved direction or position; or the type that requires the assistance of mechanisms such as approved beads, prayer wheels, etc.

But before we consider the first or third types of prayer, let us try to analyze the second type—that prayer wherein one prays for something beyond any form of human control—and evaluate it in the light of incidents we have all known intimately, incidents that we see on every hand and shall continue to see on every hand as long as prayers shall be offered.

An explosion and fire is reported deep in a mine and fear instantly grips the heart of every mother and wife who has a loved one trapped in the underground hell. Fervid, agonized prayer is on the lips of every believer or near-believer. Mrs. O'Reilly, as she watches the shroud-wrapped freight come to the mouth of the shaft, continues to pray—in utter helplessness—that her son will be among those who come up alive. Then suddenly there he is, walking off the cage that has just come up bearing some of the living.

We all know this story exactly as it appears here. We have lived it or read it time and again and shall continue to hear it time and again. Mrs. O'Reilly, when interviewed, says, "I knew that John would be spared. I knew my prayers would be answered."

Of course she didn't. Until she saw John step through the mine entrance she had lived in an agony of suspense and dread. As every charred corpse came to the surface she had crowded close to see whether it might be John. But the thanks she returns for his deliverance are no less sincere.

By her side, during the long ordeal, stood Mrs. Silinsky,

praying with equal fervor that her son would be spared. Side by side they had pressed up to each car as it arrived with its dead. . . . And then, as a corpse is placed on a stretcher, Mrs. Silinsky recognizes the shirt that she had bought just the day before for her boy and suddenly it seems to her that the world has come to an end. If she is sufficiently indoctrinated she may say, "Well, it was God's will," but her grief will knife no less deeply because it was God's rather than her will that was done.

Now let us consider the type first referred to, where additional strength, physical or spiritual, is sought; or where a psychological change is brought about through the influence of a religious adviser who, to be honest with him, may possess the kind of faith which he desires to impart to the one he prays with. As this book is being written, three religious programs (all protestant) follow one another in succession on Sunday morning, each promising to secure for those who can cast out every doubt as to the efficacy of prayer (in other words "condition themselves"), almost anything the heart may desire. One of the programs, conducted by a Dr. Thos. Wyatt in Portland, seems to specialize in healing. In this program an assistant reads letters from those whom the doctor has prayed for and who have been miraculously "cured." And in some cases these cures are as real and genuine as is the knitting of a fractured bone that has been skillfully set by a competent physician. In another program the "miraculously healed" persons actually appear before the microphone to testify to the "miracle." A third program that is sponsored by the Church of Christ Scientist adopts this same method of propagating their beliefs. These last two programs differ, however, in that one believes in "faith healing," which admits of actual sickness and pain—but curable by prayer—where the Christ Scientist insist that sickness and pain are imaginary and once that truth is realized, one is cured. I am totally ignorant as to what these people eventually die of, as there is no real sickness, but as they admit to the

imagination of sickness, it would logically follow that they finally succumb to imagination, having finally come to the point where they couldn't summon up enough faith to banish this death-dealing affliction.

The power of mind over body was well known in ancient times; is presently known to the witch doctor (or at least used by him) in darkest Africa, and it has made millionaires out of many unscrupulous quacks in these United States.

As I write this, I have a recording before me from a broadcast recently made by Dr. Wyatt, whom I have already referred to, that demonstrates how proper conditioning and mental adjustment can provide the answer to prayer. For myself I accept the story at face value, for I should not think for a moment of questioning the honesty or sincerity of this man.

He said (I quote verbatim), "A minister who held credentials with a prominent religious order came to me to be prayed for in our local services. He was in a wheelchair, paralyzed from the waist down. We prayed for him day after day, but nothing happened. I talked with him repeatedly, trying to bring him to the place where he could respond to the prayer of faith (mental conditioning). Finally in the course of our conversation, he disclosed the false belief that was blocking his deliverance. He confessed that he believed that God had put this affliction upon him because of past blasphemies. This was the teaching of his organization, and it had been handed down from generation to generation (as are all creeds in every church). He believed that God had saved him, but he also believed God was punishing him for past sins.

"I sternly rebuked this falsehood and said, 'God does not put upon you something that Jesus Christ died to deliver you from.'

"As I set forth the obvious truth, I saw the light of revealed truth break over his countenance and it was only a matter of minutes before he was walking everywhere."

Then consider the witch doctor in darkest Africa. He is called to the bedside of a very sick native who, of course—like the minister—has come under the spell of an evil spirit. As these poor savages experience the same sorrows, disappointments, delusions and griefs as do we more “enlightened” peoples, his trouble may be only a mental block such as cursed the cleric to whom Dr. Wyatt ministered. Be that as it may; this witch doctor priest, thoroughly schooled in his mystic creeds and formularies by generations of forebears, proceeds to effect a cure in the suffering wretch. A revolting potion possessing magic powers is concocted by the sorcerer (who is probably imbued with as deep a faith as Dr. Wyatt) and amid incantations and prayer, is fed to the sufferer. The “doctor” then tells him that in the morning the evil spirit will depart, that he will be cured and that he is to take up his spear and join in the hunt (the equivalent of “take up thy bed and walk”). Having childlike, unquestioning faith in the witch doctor, buoyant, sustaining hope fills the victim’s breast and in the morning, endowed with superhuman strength and confidence, he rises from his grass pallet, seizes his spear and joins the hunt. The witch doctor has used the selfsame forces as invoked by the Christian faith-healer, and his influence among his tribe is further exalted. The same “miracle” that the Christian churches bring about has been performed.

Answers to prayer? Yes, prayer of the type first referred to. A mental block is removed; a supreme will to do is created, and the suppliant goes on to consummate the object of his prayer. All religions consider such cases as miracles. Their numbers are legion; they happen every day—with and without prayer.

The shrines along the way of the pilgrimage to Mecca contain mountains of crutches discarded by the “miraculously healed” as they hobble on their tortuous way. The mountains of skeletons of the faithful, who have died on this *hadj* (one of the five pillars of Islam enjoined on all Moslems) do not fire

the imagination as do the piles of crutches for even the most devout admit that everybody will at some time die—prayer or no prayer. The death rate for this year's pilgrimage (1959) alone was in excess of a thousand. Most were buried immediately in one of the two vast cemeteries near Mecca and Jidda. The same exhibits as those found along the route of the great Moslem pilgrimage may be seen in almost every country on earth, as for example, Lourdes Grotto in France (where a lucrative trade was created selling the wonder-working water from the fountain, rosaries and other *objets de piété*), and many similar Buddhist shrines.

Before we move away from the tree called "Prayer" we might mention a fourth radio program called the "Hour of St. Francis" (Catholic). This program differs again from the other three. It is very highly dramatized and the parts of the beneficiaries of answered prayer are played by highly skilled, professional actors and the entire program is presented by one of the wealthiest, best organized and trained propaganda cabals in existence in any country, for any purpose.

But these incidents which are palmed off on the superstitious and gullible as miracles will be dealt with more fully when later we take a close-up look at those forest trees we have called "Miracles."

Then we have left for consideration only the mechanical prayer. These prayers are mechanical in that they are not spontaneous. They are more or less tailor-made but might easily have been cast from the same mold, with a few minor differences to keep them from infringing upon one another. We shall just mention and pass over these prayers which require the aid of some mechanical contrivance such as prayer wheels (used by some Buddhists), rosaries or prayer beads (much older than Christianity but pirated by that religion), prayers on paper, etc. Rosaries are in wide use by Buddhists, Christians and Moslems everywhere.

In one way, the most interesting prayer is that solicited from and offered by a community. That community may be a small church group or it may be the entire nation. Anyway, it is like a child's toy balloon—the more it is inflated the more transparent it becomes.

Let us look at such a prayer on a national scale. Here, possibly, the President himself issues a proclamation setting aside a certain period in which to present some special request to a higher power. It is understood that all denominations will kind of consolidate their prayers, obviously reasoning that the conglomerate mass will receive much greater consideration on high than would a single prayer, just as a thousand letters to your congressman merit more consideration than a single letter, no matter how intelligent that single letter might be. The prayer will concentrate upon one single request which will probably be as detrimental to as many people as it will be beneficial—for example, prayer for victory in armed strife. This prayer, though, is actually of inestimable value in that it can spark and maintain mass hysteria and keep the minds of large numbers of people concentrated on a single purpose. It builds a spirit of camaraderie that can drive a community or a nation to prodigious accomplishment. It has fired the "will to do" in the horrible holy wars of Islam, and no other people believe with the fierce conviction of the Mohammedans.

As this is being written the same type of prayer is being evoked by the Catholic bishop of Spokane, Washington, who, according to daily radio news broadcasts, is instructing the priests of his diocese to call their flocks together for a two week period of "fervent prayer" to protest against the coming visit to this country of Nikita Khrushchev. But aside from that, how much weight does that prayer carry with those who probably most loudly proclaim their faith in prayer—our leaders and policy-makers? How much confidence (faith) do they really place in divine assistance?

We are at war. The enemy is marching toward our border and we carefully choose a terrain that will give us every possible advantage. Prayers are going up from every creed entreating victory in the forthcoming conflict. Then returning scouts report that the enemy has a thousand guns to match the five hundred that we can muster.

Do our leaders get together and say, "Well, the whole country is praying; the enemy may have five hundred more guns than we but God on our side should be worth another five hundred guns?"

Not while they're in their right minds. The prayers are entirely forgotten and they decide to fall back until another five hundred guns can be brought up. Their true belief follows Napoleon's famous assertion that God fights on the side with the heavy artillery. In other words, they feel that the prayers—so far as bringing divine assistance is concerned—were just so many empty words.

If a small particle from a homogenous mass is placed under the microscope it will tell us a lot about the entire mass, and the author was recently able to observe the truth of this phenomenon in the realm of prayer.

When Secretary of State Dulles was first stricken, the reader will remember that a period was designated by the President in which the entire nation would offer prayers for his recovery. (He died shortly afterward.) A pious old lady, who provides the analogy to the speck under the microscope, and who offered up her most potent prayer, remarked, a few days later, "Well, the doctors suspect cancer. If they're right, he can't last much longer."

It isn't necessary to draw a picture here to show how this devout woman, like almost everybody else, unconsciously evaluates prayer. Can anybody deny that she is reasonably representative of the nation as a whole?

Her prayer brings to mind the story of the backward com-

munity that was in desperate need of rain to revive its withering crops. The entire community had agreed to attend church the next Sunday morning to pray for rain, but when they were all assembled in the house of worship it was observed that only one old lady had evidenced enough faith to bring along an umbrella.

Then we've all heard the political prayer that is broadcast over the airways from the floor of Congress. This prayer usually has the ring of a political speech apprising God of the good things He can give us mortals here below if He merely hops on the right political bandwagon.

And so much for the tree called "Prayer."

CHAPTER 4

Could It Happen Today?

IF THE PEOPLE of the United States had no religions, no churches, could Christ appear today and sow the seed that would develop into the Christian religion as we know its multitudinous ramifications today?

Some persons may say that such a condition—no churches, no religion could not exist today, but anybody who would make such a statement is pitifully naïve, hidebound and ill-advised. Anybody who thinks that the Russians presently aren't making astonishing progress in science, education and industry, without religion, should find an ostrich with its head in the sand of superstition and ignorance and lie down beside it and make up a congenial, sympathetic twosome.

But before we answer the question—if we are to answer it intelligently—we would have to revise the very childish, distorted and fanciful picture that is palmed off onto the gullible and superstitious over the name Jesus. For example, let us look at the pictures and statues that are placed before every child at the same time he is learning about Santa Claus and becoming familiar with *that* "picture." They invariably portray a slim, blond man, with light-colored hair and blue eyes, clad in a spotless, flowing white robe; strictly a Nordic-type person. Of the millions of words written about Christ there isn't a single authentic adjective anywhere that attempts to describe the physical appearance of either Christ or His mother. There are, however, quite detailed descriptions of the clothes that were worn by other contemporary, impoverished prophets, and they include anything but flowing white robes. Anybody who would like to have a description of the clothing worn by these poor,

isolated Jews can turn to the Bible and get a good description of the attire worn by John the Baptist, for example. It was this John who baptized Christ. Now if a conscientious historian were to attempt to produce a likeness of Confucius to illustrate a text, he would have enough intelligence and honesty to have him appear as a Chinese of that period might be expected to appear. He would have yellow skin, long, black hair and dark, slanted eyes. He would not do anything so absurd as to portray a Teuton. Or, if he wished faithfully to picture a Bantu chieftain he would show him as a Negroid—not a Caucasian.

Then let us go to Palestine, where Christ was born, and find out what the people of His day looked like. We know that they were very swarthy of complexion, so wouldn't it be much more honest to portray Christ as He undoubtedly was, swarthy of skin with black, or near-black hair, and dark eyes.

This all may seem trivial and unimportant but if the church so brazenly tries to foist upon us one spurious picture, it follows naturally that we may expect any distortion that will pay off in the winning of converts, the accumulation of wealth, an increase in political ascendancy, or any other ambitious end.

Perhaps not one person in thousands has ever sat down, in the quiet of the evening, and tried to transport himself back in time to the boyhood home of Christ, in the obscure and despised provincial village in Judea which was the scene of special miseries in this era of Roman decadence and tyranny. If he did, he would find Jesus living like any other young Jewish lad of that day, for he lived and labored at manual toil in the same village until he was about thirty years of age. The chimerical creation of the imagination that the name of Christ evokes in childish or unquestioning minds would quickly dissolve. One would see Jesus rising in the morning, washing his face and hands and donning his rough, home-spun clothes, as every other Jewish lad of that community did. He would be called to breakfast by his mother and told to wipe His feet before crossing

the lately-scrubbed floor. He would sit down with His father and mother and brothers, and when the meal was over He would push back His stool and follow Joseph out to the workshop. Few, if any, of the boys of his age with whom He came in contact would be able to read or write, so it is unlikely that He could read or write. There is no record anywhere of His having penned so much as a single word.

Such a picture as the foregoing is surely unorthodox, but it is one of a warm, flesh-and-blood person with whom the average man could feel fellowship and understanding. To most churchgoers, and to all children, Christ is the picture on the stained-glass window; the helpless sufferer nailed to the cross "all because of *my* sin." Time has enveloped Him in the same mystery and distortion possessed of a thousand gods that have awed the worshipper since man first developed enough brain to wonder if there might be an indestructible segment of his being—a soul. The church will do everything in its power to make certain that no such rational or realistic picture as we have painted above shall ever come before the eyes of its unthinking and credulous flocks.

Why shouldn't Christ be arriving here today instead of two thousand years ago? Or why shouldn't He have come three thousand years before He did? If the millions who succeeded Him needed, or need, somebody to intercede for them before a terrible and vengeful God, just as surely the millions who went before Him must have stood in the same need. Who or what is going to atone for them—unless it be that the "sprinkling" of the "blood of bulls and goats" (Hebrews 9:13) formerly sufficed to appease our God, just as it did the pagan gods of ancient Babylon, Greece and Rome.

But if Christ were to appear today, He would be coming to a world that is almost inconceivably different from what it was two thousand years ago. Then ignorance and blind superstition held the entire masses in their inexorable talons. For eons their

gods had been ruthless and savage spirits, and their fears were projected beyond the gates of Death. They were afraid—so afraid. Right down to the settling of the Americas, even the most intelligent and highly educated persons believed as implicitly in witches, evil spirits and demons as the most pious Christian now believes in God, or the Mohammedan believes in Allah. The Christian devil and the torturing fires of hell were only a mistake away.

“Christ, today, would probably have to go to darkest Africa to find similar thinking and mental conditioning,” we are likely to think.

But before we do say, “Well, He could find nothing like that in our enlightened United States now,” I am going to reproduce a news article just as it appeared in the country’s great newspapers that were served by the Associated Press on July 15, 1931:

IMAGE ON WALL EXCITES 50,000

Madonna and Child Shadow Scouted by Officials

TIE UP TRAFFIC

Chicago Devout Italians Kneel, Pray and Sing
Before “APPARITION”

BRAVE HIGH HEAT

Many Overcome—Police May Resort to Force to Break Up
Frenzied Worshipers

By Associated Press

Chicago, July 15.—A crowd of more than 50,000 persons, excited by what it thought was an image of the Madonna and Child on a building in the South Ashland Avenue Italian district, became unmanageable tonight, necessitating calls for police reserves.

Ignore Move-On Orders

The crowd was so dense street car and bus traffic had to be diverted out of the district. A demand by police that they disperse was ignored. Many persons were overcome by the intense heat and the crush.

Thousands drawn into the district by reports concerning the

"apparition" had stood reverently in front of the building throughout the day.

Shout, Sing, Pray

As darkness fell the steadily growing crowd got out of hand. Semi-hysterical men and women alternately knelt in prayer and milled about, shouting and singing hymns.

As the crush about the building became serious, police reserves arrived and attempted to keep spectators moving. At midnight, however, the gathering had shown no signs of diminishing. Police said they feared it would be necessary to use physical force to clear the streets.

Meanwhile, officials who took no stock in the "apparition" story, scoured about the neighborhood to find the cause of the outline. They were of the opinion it was caused by the reflection from street lights but were unable to discover the source.

Talk With Reverence

The neighborhood, a tenement and rooming district populated mainly by Italians, talked in hushed tones today about the reported appearance last night of the Madonna and Child.

A pedestrian first noticed what he described as a strange apparition on the sidewall of a building. He fell on his knees in devotion. Another man ran to him, thinking he had fainted. He, too, said he saw the vague "image" and devoutly knelt. Soon the sidewalk and street were jammed.

Today several persons waited all day in hopes of seeing the reported image tonight.

May Be Street Light

Explanations for the strange sight were many. Some declared it to have been nothing but a shadow thrown by a street lamp. Others said it was caused by the shadow of a small religious statue falling upon the wall. When a near-by street light was shaded or when a spotlight was thrown upon the wall police said, the shadow vanished. And with the coming of daylight the "image" dissolved.

From Gangster's Light

Lieutenant Joseph Pieroth visited the apartment of Sam Genna, one of the once notorious Genna brothers of gang warfare, and said he believed that the shadow was caused by light

from that apartment falling upon the building across the street. Pieroth declared that when a window shade was moved the shadow also moved in a corresponding manner.

The day after this news item was spread on front pages all over the country, the following item appeared in the same newspapers.

MIRACLE SOLVED BY DRAWN BLIND
Madonna and Child on Wall Vanish, Crowd Fades

By Associated Press

Chicago, July 16—Some one in the home of Sam Genna, once notorious as the leader of a liquor gang, pulled down a shade last night, and Chicago's six-day wonder—the image of a mother and her child—which appeared on the side of an apartment building in South Ashland Avenue, vanished while 20,000 spectators watched.

Genna's home is directly opposite the apartment building to which as many as 50,000 persons were attracted by the appearance of the figure on the wall. An arc lamp some distance away had been throwing its beams upon a bay window in the Genna home. The window pane, in turn, had reflected the light upon the wall of the apartment, with a lace curtain adding a shadow that resulted in a somewhat dim resemblance of the Madonna and Child.

With the discovery of the cause of the image the crowd went home disappointed. Peanut vendors and hot-dog men did a big business, while pickpockets reaped a harvest.

A newspaper reporter helped in the solution of the mystery. Toward midnight he held up a handkerchief between the figure and the window of the Genna home and noticed that the shadow partly obscured the image. He asked the police to investigate at the Genna home. Lieutenant Joseph Pieroth went into the place and examined the shade, reporting back that the mystery had been solved.

If this incident had happened a century ago, and no superstition-free person had arrived among these poor, deluded, gullible dupes to solve the "mystery" on the spot, it is a safe bet that

there would be an imposing Catholic shrine there now reporting daily "Miraculous Cures."

Yes, there are still black images from the dark ages hanging over us. And to peruse statutory laws to deal with sorcerers and witches, we don't have to go to the archives of ancient Rome or sixteenth century Spain. Let us reproduce a few articles from the statutes of the New England laws (United States) as they were in force as late as the eighteenth century: Article III. Witchcraft, which is the fellowship with a familiar spirit, to be punished with death. Article IV. Consulters with witches not to be tolerated, but either to be cut off with death or banishment or other suitable punishment. (This article was cited in the Salem trials). In 1691-92 (almost into the eighteenth century) nineteen persons were put to death in the United States for witchcraft or consulting with witches. One, Giles Cory, was tortured to death by having an accumulation of heavy, iron bars slowly placed, one by one, upon his shackled body until the weight became so intolerable that he expired. The writings and preachings of that great and influential "man of God," Cotton Mather, were largely responsible for these barbarisms.

Every reader knows that if Christ had postponed His coming until this "enlightened" age, and if He had chosen the United States for His work, He would have had the choice of many different environments. But let us assume that He chose an average size Midwest town, and lived there unmolested until the age of thirty, which was about the age at which He began preaching. Then, through some of His friends, the interesting rumor gets around that He claims to have a special mission here to fulfil—that of preparing the billions of people in the world for entrance into heaven. It is also rumored that He claims supernatural birth. "Should make an interesting story," the local reporter thinks, and a few minutes later he is in the lowly home of the Man to be interviewed.

How would the result of this interview appear in the news-

paper? Probably something like this: "When our reporter interviewed Mr. Christ, he found him in a small workshop on the back of the lot. He has been at this same stand for some eighteen years and though the shop is very small, and work is all done by hand, he has been the main support of his mother and younger brothers all this time. He took our reporter into the small kitchen in his home where he was introduced to Mr. Christ's mother who was just taking a tempting batch of bread out of her woodrange oven. Mr. Christ was asked where his father was and what he did for a living. Mr. Christ appeared to be sincere when he answered the question. It seems that his father is God, the same who created this world in which we live—and all life that inhabits it—and the myriad stars and galaxies that are presently so bewildering to our greatest scientists. Before coming here it appears that Mr. Christ and His father, God, and a third person were in equal partnership, and with equal voice in the management of the billions of universes that throw their light upon the photographic plates in our large observatories such as Palomar."

We shall not go further with this imagined interview as the reader's opinion of how it would be conducted and reported is as good as the author's.

A few pages back we took a skeptical look at the "pictures" of Christ that adorn our church walls and windows and appear on millions of pieces of colored propaganda to be put into the hands of children still highly impressionable. Let us take a look at the "pictures" of His mother that stream off the presses in equal redundancy. Is there anybody in his right mind who will say that the picture portrayed by our "reporter" is in any way derogatory? Beyond any shadow of doubt the reverse is the truth.

The home in which the Holy Family lived would be an unspeakable hovel when compared with the humblest American home of a middle-class family today. Mary would cook the

meals for her family over an open fire and would wash their clothes without benefit of soap, by pounding them on rocks in a stream or community trough. Her hands would be red and rough from toil—not the silly glamour-girl hands with which pictures and icons provide her. The clothes she wore would be spurned by the poorest American. She would be anything but the “vision” so frequently reported by childish, superstitious minds where she is always “so beautiful.” If anybody doubts this, he has no knowledge of the history of that corner of the Roman empire of that time and the unspeakable conditions under which these wretched people lived and suffered.

Unquestionably, one of the greatest misfortunes ever to befall the human race is that photography had not been invented in those days to leave an authentic photograph of the home and members of the Christ family. If one of the colored pictures, now available in such abundance, could have been given to Mary in her day, she would likely have hung it on her wall and wondered who the beautiful lady with the gold hoop above her head, and the baby in her arms might be. She would not be likely to think of the picture as that of an angel because angels of that day didn't have babies.

This picture is not developed for the scoffer who must, in order to be a scoffer, possess an immature mind and have very limited knowledge of anything beyond that which provides for physical desire. The picture, while it does (and is intended to) strip the glamour and awe from pictures, icons, imagery and what not, is painted with great care and honesty to portray the real flesh-and-blood family that lived almost two thousand years ago, in an empire that had sunk to the lowest depths of degradation; a family that yet lived a moral life that would be a pattern for any today to strive to emulate; a family that produced one of the greatest men of all time, who gave us a formula for a perfect world. Shall we ever see that formula in universal use?

But let us take one more look at Christ here in the twentieth century. It is Sunday and half the pews in the cathedral are occupied. Many of the worshippers, on their way to church, have driven past the modest home of Christ and his mother, a little curious, perhaps, as they drove by, as to what the Holy Pair might be doing at that moment.

How many readers have a good enough imagination to hear the minister concluding his prayer: "We ask this in the name of Thine only begotten Son," when they know that that Son, sleeves rolled above his elbows and sweat dripping from his forehead, is probably, at that moment, ripping a board with an antiquated saw. Or who can hear the Hail Marys when the worshippers know that Mary, at that moment, with uncombed hair falling over her tired eyes, is probably bending over a steaming tub of soiled clothes. But is there any reason why she should not be as much entitled to "hails" while bending over a washtub as when ensconced on a fleecy cloud with a ring of light encircling her head? It requires only the very minimum amount of intelligence to realize that Christ and His mother ate, drank, laughed, cried, labored, slept, knew pain and disappointment even as you and I. Can anybody imagine any church having a rich, stained-glass window installed depicting a bare-foot woman in tattered clothes digging a hoe into a small garden patch—a likeness of Mary that would be authentic—true to life?

But Father Time is the greatest and most cunning of all magicians—and, more often than not, the most malicious fraud. After twenty-five centuries he can pick up an old tooth, say: "Behold this tooth of Buddha," and build a huge, holy shrine around it and send countless millions of faithful Buddhists along torturous trails until they stand in soul-satisfying awe in sight of the holy relic. (2500 years earlier the genuine article would have been tossed unceremoniously into a cuspidor.) Or he can pick up a sliver of wood and send multitudes to Rome to see a piece of the "true cross"; or send vast pilgrimages across

hundreds of miles of burning Arabian sand to kiss a stone (the sacred black stone) which was given by the angel, Gabriel, to Abraham.

The Christian, as he reads this, has a superior, if pitying, smile on his face as he considers the Buddha's tooth, but the smile gives way to a frown as he contemplates any doubt cast upon the splinter of wood. Cold fury, perhaps, grips the Buddhist at the thought that anybody would dare disparage the sacred tooth, but he is able to smile a little as he thinks of the souvenir wood-hunter of two thousand years ago.

And this magician can send a multitude to worship at a rock from which Christ was snatched up into Heaven, while at the same time he can send another contemptuous and hostile multitude to worship at another rock, a few feet away, onto which Mohammed rode on his white stallion to ascend into the same haven of eternal bliss.

Are these things necessary props of religion? Beyond a doubt they are. Who can imagine an African bushman falling upon his knees before one who was not in familiar contact with the spirits; who would not be high enough above ordinary man to be able to plead his cause with the supernatural? Or who can imagine the more enlightened, but equally gullible man praying or making mystic signs before one who had the misfortune of coming into this world by natural birth, or who had not departed this mortal sphere via some supernatural route, or who had not personally received from the Supreme Being, or His angels, scrolls or rocks, or what not, that would henceforth be worthy of worship; something that would bring miraculous cures to the faithful and the surge of all-consuming grace into the countenance of the troubled or tortured believer? Tooth, rock or splinter—they are equally cogent. Without them no present-day religion could long be kept from complete disintegration.

Buddhism and Islam could give us exactly what the orthodox

Christian religion gives us. But I can almost hear the howls of angry protest penetrating my studio walls as I write this: "I stand in reverential awe beside some carrion tooth!" "I stagger over miles of burning desert sand to kiss a fragment of black volcanic rock!" "I face a decrepit, old, battle-scarred Arabian city and bow with my forehead to the ground while I declare, 'There is no God but Allah!'" "If I want to go on a pilgrimage I'll go, probably to some grotto in France, even if it can boast only a small fraction of the multitude of miracles recounted at shrines along the route followed by those misguided and superstitious *hadjis*." "I'll save my kisses for something like a Christian finger ring—something spiritually potent."

Before we go further it would be most educational and enlightening to interview one of the few American citizens ever to make that pilgrimage to Mecca—the *hadj*. That pilgrim is Ahmed Youssef Murad, now seventy-one years of age. At one time he was a Montana homesteader and he served as a dough-boy with the American army in World War I. This year (1959) he, with a half million others of the faithful, made the pilgrimage to Mecca and on his return was interviewed by a reporter for TIME (TIME magazine for July 6, 1959), and this is what he told the reporter: "My *hadj* was a gift from God. I will do it again, if I live. It was a gift of God to see all those people around Mount Arafat. (This is the mountain to which God took the repentant Adam so that he might be reunited with Eve from whom he had been separated for two hundred years.) There was no me and no you, no Abraham, no Jesus, no Mohammed. Just God alone was there."

Earlier in this book we read: "Unfortunate is the one who has not, somewhere along the way, known some kindly, gentle person—unfettered by priestly formularies—who had a simple faith that was the very essence of beauty. He may have been an adherent of any of the great religions. He may have attended

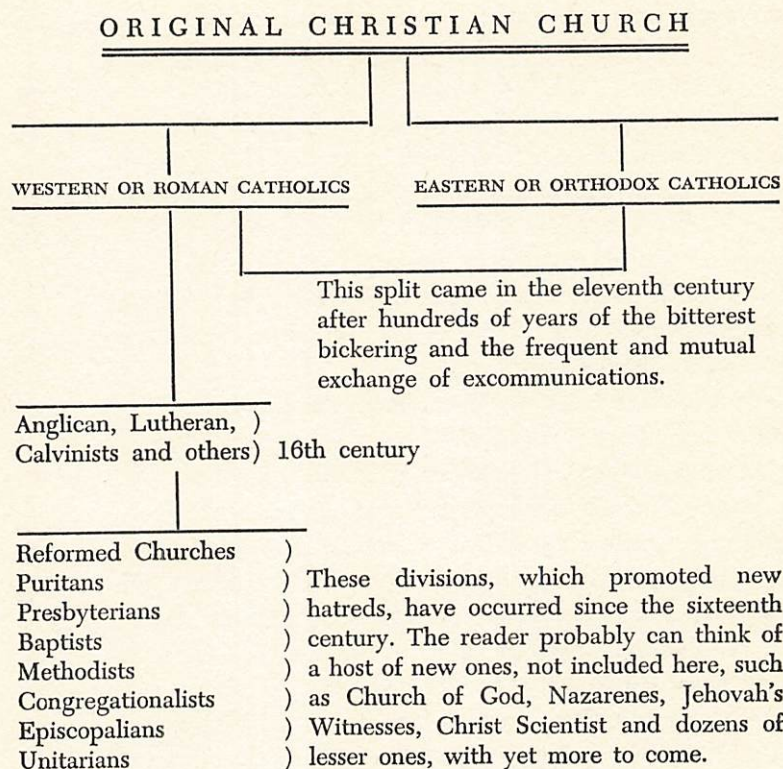
a denominational church or he may never have been inside one."

Is Ahmed such a person? Did he stand for a moment, stripped of all vanity and orthodoxy, and in the supreme joy of that moment, envision a brotherhood of all the peoples of the earth and say, as Christ said, "Peace on earth, goodwill to all men?" There was no Abraham, no Jesus; not even his beloved prophet was there—just a benevolent Creator. Are we justified in thinking that somewhere, but yet totally invisible in the stifling fog of bigotry, hypocrisy, pomp and mechanized formularies—to name just a few of the mists that obscure our horizons—there may be a common meeting place for men of all races where "just God alone is there"; a congruous God that an intelligent, thinking man could believe in.

But what may be expected from orthodox religions by way of bringing about such a world of harmony—where peace and goodwill to all will obtain—is graphically shown in the following diagram which shows up the jealousies, hatreds and lusts after power that have been elements of the so-called Christian church ever since Christ left this world. Even He would not have been able to prevent these quarrels, for the unscrupulous, the bigoted, and the power-hungry would have appropriated to their own ends every good thing He ever did.

While lost in the labyrinth of conflicting dogmas, traditions and rituals, the great religions of the earth will never be of any help to man in quest of such a common ground. Petty jealousies and the lust after power continue to drive them further apart. Affluence and prestige they must have at any cost, and these things can be obtained only by the addition of converts to their creeds.

Time was when the Christian church displayed as few scruples in its grasping for wealth as do the organized gangsters of today's underworld. Untold wealth flowed into its coffers as



its share of the confiscation of the property of wealthy non-conformists (heretics) as they fell before the tribunals of the Inquisition. Particularly was this true in Spain during the persecution and expulsion of the wealthy Jews and Moors. No extortions by the Capone gang were effected with such revolting savagery as were those by the Christian church. The skull and crossbones on a black field would be a far more fitting adornment for the great cathedrals built in those times, than the cross. How far we have left those days behind, I hesitate to say. If the word "Christianity" should properly be defined as "the

way of Christ," then no word in the English language is more carelessly used and abused.

Let me reproduce here what one of the foremost clergymen in all Christendom wrote. He is H. R. L. Sheppard, at one time canon of St. Paul's cathedral. In spite of his saturation in ritual and ancestral orthodoxy one fact could not remain hidden from him. He wrote: "It is impossible to suppose that the complicated forms which Christianity has so far assumed are any better than mere caricatures of what Christ intended."

Actually Christianity never survived long after Christ's death, although here and there, every once in a while, a frail plant from the original seed appears among the weeds. Will these seeds that have lain dormant for nearly two thousand years sometime find a climate in which they'll suddenly flourish while the weeds will wither and die?

A story which appeared in 1958 in one of our widely-read magazines shows how these frail plants sometimes can show signs of vigor. The story, which was written by a Catholic priest whose name I have forgotten, was a summation of his experiences as a missionary in the wilds of the Canadian province of Quebec. He finally gave up his work among those simple people because, as he wrote, "I found that I had no difficulty in making Catholics, but I doubt that I ever made a Christian." Here was another man who evidently thought that the word Christianity should mean "the way of Christ." Only this year the Rev. John Elmer Ford, who has done much missionary work in Ecuador and Laos, wrote: "I wouldn't cross the street to make a church member, but I'd crawl a mile on my stomach to make a Christian." The sooner the ponderous, creedal religions of the world are relegated to their proper niche beside the pagan religions of Rome and Egypt, the sooner will that "way of Christ" have a chance to flourish and the sooner will be discovered a common meeting ground for men of all races, where

all will be able to feel "peace on earth, goodwill to all men."

In the history of civilization, "survival of the fittest" has seldom meant anything more than the survival of those who by ruthless force, obstinacy, treachery and cunning were equipped to survive. It has seldom meant, at least so far as the human race is concerned, "survival of the best," and robust survival of the best is most surely not one of the main ingredients of the Christian church today.

CHAPTER 5

What Has the Christian Religion Given Us?

EVERY GREAT RELIGION solemnly promises lavish rewards in return for belief in its God. And with equal solemnity it threatens, for transgression of some ecclesiastical code, punishments far more horrible than could ever be dreamed up in the torture chamber of the blackest medieval castle—for the gods can torture throughout eternity. The foulest human fiend might sometime relent if he saw his victim being tortured forever, where death could never provide release, but I can find no account, in any religion, of a god who would so relent, once he had sentenced his victim to the tortures of hell. Modern gods, and that includes the Christian God, have changed very little from the oldest pagan gods. How long will it be before we see their exit? In the "dark" ages an enemy might fall into the clutches of a cruel and powerful baron and be duly turned over to the hardened, professional torturer to pay to the fullest, within the ingenuity of that fiend, for having incurred the displeasure of the sadistic tyrant. The Christian God likewise turns over to His professional torturer, the devil, to be tortured *forever* in the fires of hell, those who have incurred His displeasure.

Is it possible to imagine more incongruous babbling than that heard in every church where in one breath, with total abandon of all intelligent reasoning or deducing, they drool about a merciful, forgiving God while in the next they give us such a fiendish, pagan deity?

As we have already said in an earlier chapter, "Yes, the

firmest hold many Christian churches still have on their flocks is the creation of abject fear."

It has always been so wherever religion has attained to the state of imperious dogmatism. It should be interesting, in this connection, to quote from one of Plutarch's works, written while Rome still adhered to her pagan gods and knew nothing about organized Christianity: "The atheist fears nothing because he believes nothing. The superstitious man believes there are gods. A man who fears the gods is never free from fear whatever he may do or whatever may befall him. He extends his fears beyond his death and believes in the gates of hell and its fires in the darkness, ghosts, the infernal judges, and what not. The atheist does not believe in the gods. The superstitious man wishes that he did not but he fears to disbelieve."

That last sentence does not need much revision to make it applicable in today's church. It might read: "The thoroughly indoctrinated man wishes that he could rid himself of his fears of terrible vengeance in a future life, but he fears to disbelieve in his vengeful God."

Strange, isn't it, that man of average intelligence finds it impossible to shake that old belief in satanic gods!

Fear is a canker in the soul of any man. Fear never begets anything good, and in the long run, can leave nothing but destruction wherever it is allowed to tarry; yet the Christian church has harbored it and nurtured it ever since its beginning. Fear sires huge armies and ever more powerful and destructive weapons, cold wars and so on; and are these things good? Using the whiplash of fear the nations of the world say, "Give us these instruments of destruction and we can promise you continued existence, and more lavish living than your neighbor," and the tax-burdened citizen parts with that which would have provided better food and clothing for his children, better schools, better roads and generally better and happier living.

Using the whiplash of fear, the church says, "Give us bigger

and more elegant cathedrals; give us power, prestige and your unquestioning obedience and we can promise you immunity from the wrath of a jealous deity* in a life to come," and the devout but deluded flocks pour into these temples of Baal hundreds of millions of dollars which would have filled with food the mouths of millions of starving children.

I am sure that the "way of Christ" would have put food into a stomach racked by pangs of hunger before hanging a crucifix about an emaciated neck, or putting a Bible into grimy, stunted hands or raising an elegant stained-glass window for the edification of the few. When the rich, young man came to Christ, what was Christ's first thought? Did he secretly think, "Ah, one of the wealthiest chaps in the country! Now if I can just handle him right, we'll get a magnificent new synagogue out of this! And that will mean power and prestige like we've never known." No. Christ unhesitatingly commanded, "Sell all you have and give to the poor." Egotism and lust after power had no part in Christ's makeup.

Every organization, whatever its mission, must be able to convince at least a few persons that it possesses some virtue that should entitle it to continued existence. Often it matters very little how fraudulent the advertising or reasoning just so long as it doesn't stretch beyond the limits of the credulity of an uninformed and gullible public. In the same way the church must convince the world that it has some special reason for continued existence, so it has us poor mortals, regardless of race or color, "born in sin." What sin?

Now, if we don't get value received, in some form or other, we're certainly not going to "string along" with any organization—be it church, or what have you—so, of course, the church, in return for our strict compliance with its every formulary,

* Jealousy is a most undesirable and unlovable trait in any creature—man or beast—yet turn to your Bible and in Ex. 34:14 read ". . . The Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God."

will erase this defect, much as a veterinary might correct some inherited defect in a stock animal, and so assure us entry into Heaven rather than incarceration in one of the less desirable abodes provided for those who are not so tractable in this life. Thus the church justifies continued existence.

But if an omnipotent creator sees that we are being "born in sin," and that we are going to continue to be born in sin and that it is utterly beyond our power to change that situation, then should not that be a criminal indictment against Him when, "in the twinkling of an eye" He could supposedly remedy the situation, or wipe the defective herd off the face of the earth. While Adam took a nap He created a perfect mother from a scrap of bone, and probably Adam was created with equal ease. With a tried and tested formula at hand for creating, wouldn't common sense suggest that the decent thing to do—if He can't correct the defect with which we are coming into this world—would be cut off the present flood and replace this defective stock with perfect specimens?

For my part, I'll never believe in a god who doesn't have as much intelligence as a modern stock raiser, who would either eliminate any inherited defect in his herd or get rid of it and get new stock free of defects. Nor will I believe in a god who would close the gates of Heaven to the innocent new-born babe just because the Grim Reaper got to him ahead of the priest with his baptismal lotion. Admitted that two thousand years after Christ died to rid this world of sin it is as plentiful as ever, but that abundance of sin doesn't make the new-born babe a sinner. My parents could have been living in darkest Africa when I was born, but that wouldn't have made me Negroid just because there were so many Negroes in the country. So, for our being "born in sin"—hogwash; brazen fraud perpetrated upon a gullible world still reeking with the stench of the superstition and witchcraft of the dark ages.

While the Christian church did not invent this unholy fear

of the unknown, but pirated it from much older religions, it still has fed it to us in large doses and will continue to do so until we recognize it for the demoralizing narcotic it is.

If it weren't for the Christian church civilization would not be where it is today! That's what all the warring factions of the church tell us and it is one of the few things upon which they all seem to agree. And after a little study of history, one might come to the conclusion that they are right in this: civilization would be much farther advanced today if it weren't for the Christian church.

Let us look at some of the facts that are easily corroborated. If we stop to consider our present cultural status—our philosophy, our sciences and much of our literature—and trace back to find where the roots are imbedded, we will find few of them, if any, in the Christian church. Every historian knows that these growths are rooted in ancient, pagan Greece. Greece gave the world its first democracy and many students feel that, in many ways, this ancient civilization has never since been equalled. This world has never before or since, produced more profound thinkers than Aristotle, Plato, or Socrates, to name a very few of that country's great philosophers. None ever left the world a richer heritage.

While Britain was still inhabited by low-type savages, and long before the new world had been heard of, Pythagoras, Archimedes, Euclid, Apollonius and many, many others were laying the foundation for the excursions we are presently making into the fields of the sciences; Hippocrates (father of medicine) was laying a like foundation for the study of medicine, and Herodotus (father of history) had given us most of what has come down to us as recorded, ancient history. And when we look at the very blackest pages of history, and that long, long period when the dark fog of ignorance was hanging so heavy over all Europe, who preserved this priceless accumulation of knowledge to hand down to us today? Certainly not the Chris-

tian church, which wouldn't hesitate to burn at the stake anybody who might, for example, suggest that the earth revolved about the sun. No, it is the Arabs to whom the thanks must go, that ingenious people who, while the Christian church was battling over the most asinine questions that bigoted theologians could dream up, were translating the works of the great Greek masters into Arabic to be preserved for future generations.* Many of the Greek originals are lost and are known to us today only by translation from the Arabic.

Let us take a look at what the Christian church might do for the advancement of knowledge as late as the seventeenth century. Every school boy knows the story of how Galileo turned a crude telescope to the heavens and proved the earth's rotation about the sun. How did the Christian church reward and encourage him? We'll let Professor John W. Draper tell us in his own words: "He [Galileo] was declared to have brought upon himself the penalties of heresy. On his knees, with his hand on the Bible, he was compelled to adjure and curse the doctrine of the movement of the earth. What a spectacle! This venerable man, the most illustrious of his age, forced by the threat of death to deny facts which his judges as well as himself knew to be true! He was then committed to prison, treated with remorseless severity during the remaining ten years of his life, and was denied burial in consecrated ground."

There is nothing to be gained with cramming the mind with hundreds of incidents where the Christian church would have retarded—or did retard—intellectual progress. An over-all picture of what the Christian church has given us is what is desired, rather than merely one enlarged view of a small segment. So we shall not give much attention to such things as Bishop

* An interesting note in this area of thought may be found in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* which reads: "It is to the immediate successors of Mahomet that our race is indebted for the impulse given to science, which was so long wholly neglected or deliberately condemned by Christian authority in Europe."

Ussher's computation for the age of the earth, for example. This Irish prelate, commissioned by the church to determine the date of creation of this world, found that God finished the job 4,004 years before Christ, on the twenty-third day of October at nine o'clock in the morning. (As we have observed, there has never been a time when the Christian church has not been able to answer any and every question with terrible finality.) If he had multiplied this age by a million, we now know that it would have been a closer guess.

But the point which we wish to stress is not that he made a mistake, which every man must do some time, but that this ridiculous mistake became a dogma of the church and to not believe in this date—much less question it—would be heresy.

Nor shall we enumerate incidents where the church deplored further experimentation with electricity because that was an instrument of the devil. How many things we now enjoy were originally instruments and pitfalls that belonged solely to the devil! The Christian church never made a sincere effort to assist or further scientific advancement; everywhere it threw stumbling blocks in the way. Fortunately, it finally lost out in its obsession to bend science to its arrogant and domineering will. As more and more people came to lose their fear of incurring its savage displeasure, knowledge slowly began to increase and the church came to the place where it, for a refreshing change, had to bow or be laughed to extinction. It chose—unfortunately, perhaps—to avoid extinction and now poses as the greatest and foremost medium for the dissemination of *all* knowledge.

A Look at the Christian Heaven and Hell — Their Boss and His Bible

Introductory Note

Before beginning this chapter, I should want the reader to know that I would not for a moment think of denying the existence of an *intelligent* Creator who created this universe and all life therein. I recall reading, at some time or other, an article by an author whose name I have long since forgotten, in which he wrote: "It is about as reasonable to believe that this universe is the result of chance or accident as it is to believe that this book is the result of an explosion in a print shop during which the print accidentally fell in such a way as to form all the words which appear here."

Unfortunately, perhaps, neither I nor anybody else can furnish unquestionable proof of the existence of an intelligent Creator (notwithstanding the opinions of theology to the contrary), but such a Creator would bear little resemblance to the incongruous invention that has been handed down from ancient Semitism and adopted into the Christian church and offered to us to worship.

It requires a colossal egotism for anybody to stand up and say that he *knows* there is no Creator. Such egotism is matched only by Christian theologians in their vaunted claims to be able to answer with such finality, any and every question that might pertain to a Creator, or a life after death, and to reduce it to despotic, dogmatic form. If two such positive and diametrically opposite answers come up, the church very simply splits into two factions, each going its own way, maintaining that it is right and all others are heretics. For my part, I am ready to believe

in a Creator but I must reject the idea of one who is today represented as a loving father and tomorrow as a fool and a pagan deity.

The Christian Heaven and Hell

EVERY RELIGION TRACES BACK to a most humble, and often despised origin, for nothing, either good or bad (religion, art, science, great business empires or organized gangsterism), has come into, or could have come into this world full-grown; the seed is always smaller than the tree. In their infancy all our present-day religions knew bitter and savage persecution by older religions. And our present-day religions, in their turn, as they reached maturity, persecuted just as savagely as they had been persecuted—with the exception, perhaps, of Buddhism. The Christian religion and Mohammedanism have been the worst.

Every writer of fiction knows that there is one element he can never omit from his story if he expects it to hold interest and be read. That element is "Conflict." It may be conflict between man and man, between man and beast or between beast and beast. It may be conflict between man and the elements or man and morals, but conflict will be there or the story will never roll off the presses. In the same way, and for the same reason, every religion has always possessed and must possess this element. Every religion, from the most debased paganism through the most civilized religion is the story of conflict between good spirits and bad spirits; between good gods and wicked gods; between good influences and evil influences. And, just as in war, every party expects of his ally value received.

The poor human (ever the low man on the totem pole) always allies himself with the good spirit or god (good in that he offers greater reward, or less punishment, than the bad god), or with the more powerful deity. In return for strict com-

pliance with all rituals and dogmas, the person whom we shall call Christian, for want of a more appropriate name, expects a soft place in heaven, and escape from the wrath of a fearful deity. Undoubtedly, desire to escape horrible and eternal physical punishment is more coercive than the desire for reward. What value he in turn thinks he can give his god, outside of strict compliance with dogmas, I cannot imagine. Compare the puny mechanical forces he can control, with the explosion of a mighty volcano or the surge of a great tidal wave. Compare the greatest structure he has ever built (and which will soon be forgotten rubble) with the creation of our solar system, which is but a speck in the universe. Compare the greatest work of art with an evening sunset, or the greatest musical composition with the whisper of the wind in a great forest or the babbling of a peaceful mountain brook.

Some Christians call the human race the "future citizens of Heaven," and the first duty imposed by them seems to be to produce the greatest number possible, in spite of the incontrovertible fact that overpopulation (no exception) has always been and always will be the spawning ground of war, vice, poverty and pestilence—the breeding ground for the poorest possible type of "future citizens." Even as late as the turn of this century it fostered organized infanticide in many countries of the world. Today overpopulation will do no more toward supplying God with desirable citizens for His Heaven, than it did a hundred or a thousand years ago.

Read what Drew Pearson recently wrote, after making a study of social conditions in Haiti: "Under its religion, which is a mixture of Voodooism and the Catholic church, babies have been a blessing and have made it the most densely populated area in the new world. With density of population has come poverty. Along the waterfront in Port-au-Prince I passed through one of the most squalid slums I have seen anywhere in the world; masses of Negroes squatting under mats propped on

poles, packed together in frustrating idleness, ready to rise up and be led by any dynamic rabble-rouser who comes along."

Yes, future citizens to offer to God with which to populate a fanciful heaven—offered in return for exemption from future travail. What a tempting offer this must be to a god who supposedly can create perfect angels at will, or can create a billion universes like the one of which our solar system is but a speck! Just a small amount of common sense and intelligent reasoning should be all that would be needed to convince anybody that He would not continue to depend upon this sin factory here below which His Son, two thousand years ago, "came down" to put in order but which is still producing, faster than ever before, these future, defective, born-in-sin citizens.

"Fanciful" heaven? In all ancient mythology there is no more fanciful abode than the Christian heaven. Where is it? What is it like? Under what conditions shall we inhabit it—bodied or disembodied wraiths? What shall we do, once we get there, by way of earning our keep? Will it be one perpetual mass or endless chanting of praises to an egotistical god who will demand nothing more than that as we kneel at a garish altar? I have never heard anything remotely resembling a comprehensive or rational definition of heaven. A place of many mansions, they tell us, but that means nothing. A place where there will be no more dying, they all agree (as did all pagans back to the dawn of history), but everlasting life in most of the heavens I have heard of would be worse than obliteration. Will we remember everything that has happened in this life and recognize our friends and loved ones on "that other shore"? If not, that means permanent death of everything in this life anyway. If we do recognize our loved ones, through what medium shall that recognition come—through duplicates of our present bodies? We have been told enough to let us know that life, in any case, will be vastly different from what it is here. There will be "no marrying or giving in marriage," for example

(St. Mark 12:25). Nor will there be male or female (Galatians 3:28) Sir George Rawlinson, one of the greatest authorities on Oriental history and religion who ever lived, says: "How it happened that in Egyptian thought the future life occupied so large a space, and was felt to be so real and substantial, while among the Hebrews and other Semites it remained, even after contact with Egypt, so vague and shadowy, is a mystery which it is impossible to penetrate."

And at the best, with infinity in time behind us and infinity in time ahead, the Christian heaven doesn't yet seem to be a dependable and firmly established institution where happiness, harmony and goodwill may be expected to be the eternal order of things, for the Bible as much as tells us that there have been disputes in the past when God has had to toss certain angels out of his domain. So why should not these revolts be witnessed in the future—perhaps more fearsome than anything in the past.

You may save yourself the trouble of going to the clergy for an intelligent answer to these simple questions, for those gentlemen are fast coming to the place where they know less about what they profess to know than anybody else. A five year old child can furnish as intelligent answer as they. "An awful nice place where 'good' people go," he would probably tell you. Can you improve or amplify that definition?

Perhaps the greatest appeal that heaven has is that it is in every way the opposite of hell. Hell is far more simple and more easily comprehended. Hell is fire and brimstone; "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth." Hell is the devouring flame (see actual prayer on page 22) from which there is no escape, even through death.* Perhaps, then, it may not be so necessary to be too concerned about what heaven may be like?

* See gospel of St. Mark 9:43 and 44: ". . . and if thine hand offend thee cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands, to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched." The following four verses continue to picture hell fire that "never shall be quenched."

We are going to appropriate a few paragraphs here which normally would have been included in Chapter VIII, but because they give a very clear and intimate description of the real, physical hell of the Christian church as it was unveiled and revealed to three illiterate and imaginative children (by special courtesy of the Virgin Mary), they can be made to do double duty here.

Almost every Catholic is more or less familiar with the story of the Lady of Fatima. It seems that on May 13, 1917, she appeared—"radiantly beautiful," of course—astride a "bright cloud" that "stood over a small oak tree," to three illiterate and superstition-ridden children in a most backward part of that backward country, Portugal. The children, needless to say not of a scientific turn of mind, failed to notice such things as what type of propulsive force the Lady's chariot may have used or what anchored it "over a small oak tree." All they remembered, according to the Church's version of the affair, is that this beautiful Lady gave them a "Terrifying Picture Of Hell." Then speaking to them, she said, "You have seen hell where the souls of sinners go."

The *Herald Tribune* News Service has investigated this story with more than ordinary thoroughness, and in one of their recent articles on the subject they described the vision of hell—which the Holy Virgin spread before the eyes of the children—in considerable detail as follows: ". . . we were able to behold a sea of fire. Plunged in this flame were devils and souls that looked like transparent embers; others were black or bronze, and in human form; these were suspended in the flames which seemed to come from the forms themselves—there to remain, without weight or equilibrium, amid cries of pain and despair. . . . The devils could be distinguished from the damned souls by the terrifying forms of weird and unknown animals in which they were cast."

Just think of it and shudder! In the year 1960 this "Christian" church is still shoveling up that old slime for supposedly intelligent people to wallow in, in order to continue to hold them in the utterly demoralizing fear in which it has been able to hold

them for eighteen centuries or more. It is perfectly willing to shove people back—intellectually—three thousand years beyond the “dark ages” in Europe, merely to retain ignorance, superstition and stupidity; and, above all, the fear which can terrorize them into following old dogmas without daring to question. What a pitifully short distance we have come, in matters of religion, in six thousand years! How little the Christian God has changed from the fiendish, pagan deities of the dim past!

This, however, was only the first of three revelations (or secrets, as the Church designates them) that were told to the children. Although we may digress a little here, we might as well consider this “miracle” now as later under the chapter titled “The Trees Called Miracles.”

The second secret was contingent upon the children’s success in persuading the *whole world* to begin a special devotion to Mary and that Russia be consecrated to the Immaculate Heart. “If you do what I tell you,” said the Blessed Virgin, “this war [World War I] will end and many souls will be saved.” What an astounding revelation—the war would come to an end just as a thousand wars before it had. And what a capricious and sporting God was directing His erstwhile spouse! He was ready to wager the eternal fate of millions of souls—perhaps yours and mine among them—upon the persuasive powers of three irresponsible kids.

Incidentally, World War I ended without this being accomplished. The only devotion to the Lady of Fatima that might even generously be attributed to the children and called a world-wide devotion is a recent development. Russia was not “consecrated” to the Immaculate Heart of Mary until nearly thirty years later. Would any responsible, omnipotent, all-wise God handle His business in such a manner? Would He gamble with His creations so foolishly? It is easy for the Catholic Church and its adherents to say that the First World War did end, that a “second, more terrible” war did come, and that this was what the Lady promised—through three small children in one of the most remote villages in the civilized world. But this

line of thinking can only be deemed, by courageous, intelligent men, as a most puerile form of rationalization.

The year 1960 is supposed to be the year in which the third "terrifying secret" will be made known to a trembling world—a secret so truly fearsome that millions of Catholics believe that Pope Pius XII fainted when it was disclosed to him. But reliable rumors now persist that the Church may mercifully suppress this third revelation. (But keep the smelling salts handy for a while yet.) Some parts of the world are becoming enough enlightened that they can't stomach much more of this rot. It will be interesting to see if the Church will dare brazen out another disclosure.

It was to be on October 13, 1917, that the children were to have their final powwow with the Beautiful Lady and she had promised them that at that time a great miracle would be performed, and 70,000 gullible Portuguese had gathered at the spot to share the mystery with the children. The 1960 *Catholic Almanac* refers to the "terrifying phenomenon" that was witnessed that day. Witnesses declared that the sun "plunged drunkenly" toward the earth, then "finally swooped up again to regain its normal place in the sky." *Whew!* Don't ask me whether it was the sun that was drunk or seventy thousand hysterical Portuguese still living in the Dark Ages. I wasn't there.* And anyway, I am only passing on (second-hand) information for which the hierarchy, not I, vouches. This show, like the one at Lourdes, rated a shrine de luxe while the apparition on the Chicago slum wall (page 40) rated nothing. Obviously some discrimination here.

But it is well worth while to notice that here again it is the fear of hell fire that is used to bring these children to heel rather than an all-consuming devotion to an ever-sympathetic and loving Creator.

(This incident has been approved by the Roman Catholic

* This must be such a common, every-day sight in England, France, Germany, Turkey and North Africa that the "terrifying phenomenon" passed unnoticed in those countries, as not one of them thought it worth reporting.

Church and the Holy See as "worthy of belief" and the Fatima Lady worthy of devotion—*Catholic Almanac*, 1960, page 269.)

During the last two or three generations the old hell seems to be slowly disappearing, as men's minds become more enlightened and the black cloud of superstition shows feeble signs of dissipating, though as of yet, little light is getting through. But let us hope for the time when no clergyman will have the effrontery (and lack of ordinary common sense) to stand in a pulpit and try to cram down our throats such a hell, and in the next breath refer to a "just" and "merciful" God. It will be an undisguised blessing to wipe off the face of the earth and out of men's minds any religion which would entertain and perpetuate the Christian hell—this theft from the most debased in heathendom. Out-and-out atheism could not be as demoralizing. A God anything less than a devil should not be mentioned in the same breath as the Christian hell.

Millions of words have been written by professional theologians on the subject of hell alone, and the more that is written the more befogged both they and the poor proselyte become. When an intelligent engineer finds that he is on the wrong track, he scraps his plans and starts again from scratch, regardless of how many hours of toil are represented. But not the clergy; they continue to pile faulty building block upon faulty building block until they know less about what they profess to know than anybody else. They have been squeezed between dogmas until they are as narrow as Euclid's definition of a line. But if this book can help a few readers to scrap all the fripperies that the dogmatic machinery of the church has manufactured and built into its structure, and start out again with just common sense and intelligent reasoning, it will have accomplished its purpose.

Describing heaven negatively, that is, naming those things which it isn't, is not, however, very satisfying. Every person who believes in the possibility of another life after death here

must have a deep desire to know something about the place he would strive to enter, as well as the place he would strive so desperately to avoid. But no peoples ever have been more fogged on this issue than "Christians." Most heathens had a much clearer conception than we of what was in store for them, for they seldom entertained the thought of not having their earthly bodies restored so that life would continue much as it had here, but without this life's trials and tribulations.

The ancient Egyptians prepared the body so that at some future time the soul could re-enter it and bring it to life. If the body should happen to be destroyed, the soul would then spend eternity roaming through the universe in search of it. For that reason mummification became a very exact and elaborate process that required months of work on a single body. Opening into the tomb, where the body was interred, was a small unobstructed channel through which the soul could enter, in due time, to rejoin its body. Food and other accoutrements to begin the new life were buried with the mummified body. So it seems that five thousand years ago, the most civilized peoples of that day had a much clearer conception than we of what life in another world would be.

The North American Indian seems to have had little difficulty in visualizing the life hereafter; he simply stepped into another world where the hunting grounds were more abundantly stocked than they were in this world.

The inability to answer these questions is not, however any more a reflection upon the intelligence of our clergy than is the inability to tell us whether Mars is inhabited. But it does give the lie to their claim of familiarity with the Deity and to their claims of infallibility as supernaturally appointed guides to keep us on the straight and narrow path, and away from the pitfalls on this exceedingly hazardous journey between the cradle and the grave.

The real truth is that we don't know one iota more about

a future life, or a creator, than did the heathen of five thousand years ago, for both he and we know exactly nothing.

Since the first man left this earth not one has returned to tell us about that other life. Like the first man we can only hope; perhaps, with the stronger hope of a Tennyson, we can say, "I hope to meet my Maker face to face when I have crossed the bar."

We can hope that the next life may be something like that envisioned by another poet when he wrote: "There each for the joy of living, and each in his separate star, shall do the thing as he sees it best, for the God of things as they are." Beyond a doubt neither poet could conceive of a savage God who, for any reason whatever, would condemn a soul to eternal torture in his hell.

As we look at Christian doctrines, and think of the ridiculous dogmas that are swallowed with never a thought of questioning even the most absurd of them, it is interesting to take a brief glance at some religions, older than ours, and think of how readily we condemn these earlier peoples for unquestioningly swallowing the same dogmas; how we tag them as "unenlightened and superstitious." Yet no peoples ever have been asked to believe more things that ordinary common sense would reject than have the "sheep" in the "fold" of the Christian church.

The teachings of the early prophets—Confucius, Buddha, Christ or Zoroaster—were simple truths, but, as unconscionable, unscrupulous, power-hungry men began to take over, those simple truths were soon twisted to further the ambitions of these men. Dogmas, formulas and amulets crept in to add the mysterious elements that superstitious people must have and love so dearly, and no end of miracles were added to reinforce the new monsters.

Where Christ or Buddha could have given us all the instructions they would have wished to leave, on a single page, countless millions of nonsensical, ambiguous words have been written,

most of them intended to refute, condemn or contemn writings appearing just before them. Into the holy books of the Buddhists, the Christians, and all other sects soon crept all kinds of ridiculous miracles—that is, they are all ridiculous except Christian and old Hebrew miracles. I can see no reason why we should believe that Christ went about the country spitting in people's eyes and ears to cure deafness or blindness (Book of St. Mark 7:32-35 and 8:23) or that the Red Sea divided to make a dry road-bed for the fleeing Israelites, and then turn right around and reject the same miracles recounted in other earlier holy books. If any of these books is guilty of plagiarism, it would have to be the Christian Bible, for the other writings appeared before it.

And while we are speaking of plagiarisms and originals, let us take a look at some of the writings found in Zoroastrianism, and then wonder to what extent we might be indebted to them for many of our present beliefs.

However at this point, before we go further, it might be worthwhile to recall a few facts of history which might help explain how and where many Hebrew beliefs might have originated and how they might have changed to meet the needs of the time.

Many centuries before the descendants of Jacob had found their way out of Egypt (under the leadership of Moses—about the 14th century B.C.) into Canaan, where they partially subdued the Canaanitish tribes, the Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians and the non-Semitic Hittites had attained a high degree of civilization. Religious beliefs and practices had become firmly established and great libraries, like those at Ninevah, Babylon and Nippur, containing many thousands of volumes, had long been in existence and it was to these civilizations that the Hebrews were indebted for what progress they had made culturally. It is utterly impossible that their religious beliefs would not be greatly influenced by or be completely rooted in those

civilizations. And centuries before the Hebrews had been heard of, Egypt had been exposed to monotheistic beliefs. Consider these maxims by Patah-Hotep, Egyptian Pharaoh of the fifth dynasty: "If any one beareth himself proudly he will be humbled by God, who maketh his strength." These words are from a manuscript which is probably the oldest in the world. Note how closely the work resembles the Hebrew Bible—or rather how closely the Bible resembles this work. Then consider the translation from an old Babylonian cuneiform tablet dating somewhere around the second millenium B.C.

O my god who art angry with me, accept my prayer. . . .
May my sins be forgiven, my transgressions wiped out.
May the ban be loosened, the chains broken,
May the seven winds carry off my sighs. . . .
Let me be pure like the sheen of gold.

One might think one was reading from the Old Testament psalms. And take particular note of the number seven. How many scores of times that number is used in the later Hebrew Bible!

At the time of the migration to Canaan, the Hebrews had an unusual opportunity to develop national characteristics unmoled, because the Babylonian, Assyrian and Egyptian empires were badly exhausted by their struggles with one another for supremacy. Yet for a long period the Hebrews lived in nothing better than a state of anarchy. "There was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes." And what was right in his eyes was, more often than not, the very same thing that was right in the eyes of organized gangsterism in these United States during the prohibition era. Any one who may be inclined to doubt this may turn to his Bible and the 25th chapter of the book of I Samuel and make his own deductions. Verse 8 shows the bandit David (later King David) demanding protection from a wealthy man who "was very great"—probably a

Canaanite. In return for tribute (or protection) David would not put in jeopardy the lives of this man or his family—until he coveted and demanded *more* loot. Verses 10 and 11 record the “great man’s” refusal to be intimidated into paying protection. Verse 13 describes David’s preparation for murder and the theft of everything the man had acquired through his labor and thrift. Verses 32–42 describe David’s seduction of his victim’s wife and how she became just another number in his harem. Verse 22 is of consequence only because of its filth which would immediately land a publisher in jail today if he were to consign it to the U. S. mails. Through all David’s banditry the Hebrew Jehovah (the Christian God) is presumably working with him.

The only thing which could bring the Hebrew tribes together was the specter of resurgent military ambitions in Egypt, Babylonia and Assyria. Even then they couldn’t hold their own, Jehovah or no Jehovah. A cuneiform tablet gives us an Assyrian king’s (Sennacherib) own account of one campaign against the Hebrews: “I took forty-six of his strong, fenced cities; and of the smaller towns. . . . I took and plundered a countless number. And from these places *I captured and carried off* as spoil 200,105 people, old and young. . . . Hezekiah himself I shut up in Jerusalem, his capital city, like a bird in a cage, building towers round the city to hem him in . . . so as to prevent his escape.” Three or four decades earlier, Sennacherib’s father had brought Israel to her knees and carried off into captivity the most influential of the ten tribes of Israel, dispersing them mostly through Media. Later campaigns waged against the Hebrews by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, and the Roman emperor, Titus, were much more devastating.

Now let us return to the beliefs found in Zoroastrianism.

Just when Zoroaster lived cannot be determined because of his great antiquity. He is never placed later than a thousand years before Christ. Aristotle assigns him to a period many thousands of years before Christ. Plato calls him the founder of the

doctrine of the *maji*. But let us get along with the story of his life, and the elaborate and powerful religion he is credited with founding, but for which he undoubtedly furnished only a feeble seed like Buddha supplied for ponderous Buddhism and Christ for mechanized Christianity.

Zoroaster, out of love for wisdom and righteousness withdrew from men and for some time lived in solitude upon a mountain. (Buddha and Christ, on different occasions, likewise withdrew from men). The mountain was consumed by fire, but Zoroaster escaped uninjured and spoke to the multitudes. Later Satan approached and tempted him to make him renounce his faith. (Christ had the same experience.)

The Zoroastrian creed presupposes two great spirits—the one, Ormuzd, who represented everything good and pure, and Ahri-man, who represented everything evil in this world. (Very similar to the Christian God and devil). Both spirits possessed creative powers. Ormuzd was not entirely alone for, like the Christian God, he had many angels (*genii*). Now these two spirits are in perpetual conflict, with the entire world their battleground. They do not engage in battle personally, but leave that to their respectively created creatures to carry on. In the center of the battle is man, with his soul the prize. Although Ormuzd created man, he created him free in his determinations, so that it was possible for him to fall under the influence of Satan. (The Christian God created man but he, too, can fall under the influence of the devil.)

The religion's bible has a passage which reads: "Since thou, O Mazda, didst at the first create our being and our souls in accordance with thy mind, and didst create our understanding and our life together with the body, and works and words in which man according to his own will can frame his confessions, the liar and the truthful alike lay hold of the word and the knowing and the ignorant each after his own heart and understanding." (The Christian God created man in "His own image.")

By true confession of faith, by good deeds and keeping pure in body and soul, man impairs the power of Satan and entitles himself to reward from Ormuzd in the next life. But evil deeds render great service to Satan and will bring man a place in "everlasting" hell. Man's wickedness cannot be undone but a surplus of good works can counterbalance them, or outweigh them. Hence, at death, if his good deeds quite evidently outweigh his bad deeds, he goes directly to heaven. If the reverse is clearly true, he goes directly to hell, where torment will be his lot forever. The statements of his life are made out at the accountant's bridge (*cinrato peretush*) over which he must pass in either case. If his good deeds and bad deeds seem to balance, he is sent to an intermediate place (something like Christian purgatory), to wait until the last great judgment for a decision.

Ormuzd finally decided to send a prophet to open men's eyes and show them the way to true salvation. Zoroaster was found a fit person for such a mission and, like the early Christian prophets and Mohammed, he spoke frequently with God.

Like Christ's apostles, Zoroaster believed and preached that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. But before the end there will be a final decisive struggle between God and Satan, and Satan, of course the loser, will, with all mortals who have been turned over to him, be cast into the "great abyss" where he will lie forever powerless. Thereafter the faithful will live happily with Ormuzd and his angels, for there will be no more evil to disturb them. (The Christian devil is to be "chained" and thrown into the fiery pit so that there will be nothing, in the next world, to make it difficult to live the good and perfect life.)

The Zoroastrian religion finally developed into a powerful priesthood and highly-organized state church, fully capable of compelling compliance with its rituals, dogmas and laws (much as Spanish Christianity of the fifteenth century) but the invasion of the Mohammedans, with their unspeakable persecutions, in the seventh century of our era, gave the death-blow to the

religion. Some places in India it still exists in small localities, but greatly corrupted. How much of this great religion filtered into Christianity by way of early Judaism?

The Boss of the Christian Heaven

The boss of the Christian heaven is one of the most absurd and incongruous creations of all time. If we dismiss all the grandiose arguments and inventions of pedantic theologians—covering the last dozen centuries—with the scorn they deserve, we shall be able to analyze Him without prejudice one way or another and come to see what a ridiculous contradiction He is. Almost as soon as we are old enough to distinguish one sound from another we begin to hear of Him—the church is still influential enough to attend to that. As soon as we are able to distinguish one color from another, extravagant and preposterous “pictures” of His Son (in dozens of roles), saints, madonnas with babe in arms, scenes from heaven and so on, ad infinitum, are placed before our eyes. Is it any wonder that we can gather an hysterical mob to worship a shadow cast upon some slum tenement wall, as reported on page 40 of this book. (As this book is being written the ubiquitous Virgin Mary is making simultaneous appearances—via shadow, of course—in a backward community in Spain and on a church spire in Poland where she is drawing the usual type of morbid crowds.)

We have learned that He is omnipotent—superlatively so. He is the sum total of wisdom—could never make a mistake. He looks into the future—all the way down the long vista of eternity and sees everything that is going to come to pass. In fact, so that we too may take a look into the future, He has supplied us with a book of nightmares which the church calls the Book of Revelation, but which has revealed to us nothing but the gullibility of great masses of the people and the amount of superstition in the world. A revelation or a guide book that

is interpreted differently by everyone who reads it, and which produces bitter conflict among those readers, is a sorry star to steer by.

And above all, this Boss of Heaven is "merciful" and "just."

Let us examine these attributes that are claimed for Him, in the light of simple reasoning and equally simple deductions which a person of near-average intelligence should be able to make.

His infallibility and wisdom: He created man—for what reason I have been never able to learn other than to "be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it" (Gen. 1:28), and to tyrannize over all the less fortunate creatures—"every living thing that moveth upon the earth." He was completely satisfied with His accomplishment at the time, for He "saw everything He had made and, behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31).

Now one of the most cruel and despicable things one can think of would be for a person to deliberately place before his small child temptation to do evil. Imagine a parent placing heroin in his child's room and, after telling him how to use it, saying, "Now never use this stuff because if you do you'll become a dope addict." Or leaving a loaded pistol in his child's playpen and then saying, "Now don't ever point that at Johnny because it might go off and kill him." Yet that is exactly the way God dealt with His first children, Adam and Eve.

In their back yard, which apparently possessed the most interesting features of present-day nudist camps, he placed a tree which Eve saw "was good for food and pleasant to the eye and a tree to be desired to make one wise" (Gen. 3:6)—quite a temptation. Then He issued these instructions: "Ye shall not eat it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." Now, by way of adding further temptation, God created a serpent—that evidently had free access to the garden—and this serpent "was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God

had made" (Gen. 3:1). This serpent, like a thousand other pagan inventions, spoke fluently in the language of the day, and he told Eve, in effect, that God's threat of death upon eating of this tree was just so much eyewash.

After this subtil serpent had dared and tempted Eve for some time, she finally succumbed to his charm and logic, and plucked some of the fruit of which both she and her spouse partook, and immediately they both felt a very strong feeling of guilt—also considerable embarrassment because that slimy serpent had departed without supplying them with the clothes which they were to require thereafter. Adam felt guilty enough to slink off and hide when he heard the "voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." (How one recognizes a voice walking, I cannot tell the reader.) When God missed Adam from the scene, he called, "Where art thou?" (Gen. 3:9). In spite of the fact that He knows all, looks into the future and knows everything that is going to happen, He couldn't find Adam until Adam answered; and He wasn't yet aware that the Tree of Knowledge had been pilfered. "Hast thou eaten of the tree?" He inquired. Now, when Adam admitted he had, God suddenly discovered that the product that he had originally thought "was very good" was not so good after all, and wishing to assure himself that the disobedient and untrustworthy Adam would not live forever, He issued these instructions: "and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat it, and live forever," he is to be expelled from the garden of Eden. (Obviously if Adam had got his teeth into this other tree, it would have been beyond the power of God to visit death upon him; God would have had Adam in his hair throughout eternity.) And to make sure that Adam would not sneak back in, He placed on sentry duty cherubims with flaming swords "which turned every way" to protect the tree of life. I'm sorry I can't tell the reader what finally happened to this tree of life—unless it died of old age—for I'm sure

that if it were still living, *Life* magazine would have had a picture of it for us long ago.

After this episode, a rather heated discussion took place between God and the serpent, and God put a "curse" on him, exactly as any pagan god of the Phrygians or Romans would have done—which is beside the point here; we have so far endeavored only to show how rather stupid, childish and blind, and prone to making errors, is this Christian God. These ridiculous stories are not even as consistent or congruous as those tales of the remarkable adventures of Ulysses as told by Homer, centuries before the birth of Christ.

There are many other stories in the Bible, that spell out fallibility and constant blundering by the Christian God, such as His regret that He had created man—"and it (the wickedness of man) repented the Lord that He had created man on the earth" (Gen. 6:6).

Another characteristic that is universally despised in man is vindictiveness. Yet all through the entire Bible are stories, which time and again, expose the most vindictive traits in the Christian God. For example, we read through only a few chapters of the first book before we are told of God's anger against man and his decision to take vengeance, by drowning like rats, the entire population of the earth, with the exception of Noah and a few of his cronies. This decision, in itself, does not portray a lovable trait, but it shows nothing but cruel vindictiveness when He decides to drown all animals and birds, as well: "I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them" (Gen. 6:7).

However, in His foolish, vindictive anger, He took the precaution to have Noah save enough breeders so that the earth would soon be teeming again with the identical creatures he regretted having created. Isn't that a superior intelligence to

build up as exemplary! About as smart as a fellow who has just smashed his thumb with a hammer taking another "sock" at it, because it was hurting him. No wonder some churches are so fearful of letting their members read the Bible for themselves! The reader, in a very short time, can search out many other examples of this kind for himself.

But is it any wonder that the worship of this God so often consists of no more than lip service. Worship still is, and always has been, mostly conformity with elaborate rituals and formulas, preferably in the most elegant surroundings possible, and in the presence of elaborate—if gloomy—icons, which should more properly be called "Idols." These things are designed to create a feeling of awe which is wrongly interpreted as a feeling of reverence. The worshipper goes to church on Sunday, takes part in flatulent platitudes which he calls prayers, makes a few mystic signs, bends his knee a few times to his hassock, and Monday morning takes up life exactly where he left off—a life that very seldom resembles the simple way of Christ. No other religion observes these rituals with the fierce loyalty of the Mohammedan, but that does not guide him along the way of Christ, either.

Then again, worship is frequently nothing more than the product of fear, which can poison the minds of otherwise brilliant people, as well as those of the superstitious, illiterate and ignorant. An incident which happened some years ago, and in which I played a part, often recurs to me as illustrative of this fact. My neighbor and I had planned a distant fishing trip, and we were to start on our way early Sunday morning. As we were going into an unusually beautiful country, it was agreed that it would be nice to take our wives along. Now this neighbor—a man who actually lived the "way of Christ" much more closely than most of us today—had no religious affiliations of any kind, but his wife, a well-educated woman, considered herself a devout Catholic. When the subject of accompanying

us was broached, this woman said, "I'd like to go, if you'll only wait until after mass. You know I never miss mass; there isn't one of us who knows anything whatever about the next world and, as for me, I'm taking no chances." In spite of her early and strict religious training, she realized that she knew "nothing whatever" about any life beyond the grave. But the fear inculcated into her infant brain would not be dispelled—she was afraid; so afraid. That is why every highly-developed religion—Mohammedan, Christian, or any other—says, in effect, "Give us that child's mind for the first five or six years and you can have him after that." Not one intelligent and observant reader, be he bishop, priest, rabbi or "unbeliever," will honestly question that statement.

I believe with the Mohammedan whole-heartedly when he proclaims, "There is but one God," but beyond that I am not with him. That "one God" is neither the Mohammedan Allah nor the Christian God who, in both cases, is the metamorphosis of the Jehovah of the Israelites who, in turn, inherited Him from an old, prehistoric, Semitic religion which was ever ready to make bloody sacrifice to either appease or cultivate Him. Later we shall investigate some of those sacrifices and trace them through into the Christian church of today.

We wonder, then, should not the word "Christianity," even in its finest meaning, be eliminated from the language, and an entirely new word substituted. The true way of Christ, which comprehended nothing but peace and goodwill to all men was also the way of Buddha and Confucius, and should be the highest goal of all mankind, but when we use the word "Christianity," we unconsciously make "outsiders" of all but those who subscribe to the dogmas of the Christian church. Would not a word that could be universally accepted as descriptive of the way of Christ or Buddha be a long step toward that goal of peace on earth, goodwill to all men?

The Boss of Heaven is a "merciful and just" God.

In all the roles in which He is portrayed, it is in this one that He is the most unconscionable fraud. Let us try an altogether different and more simple approach to this ancient tenet of the church, and for the moment forget that such things as religions ever existed. Let us imagine that an ordinary human being like ourselves has suddenly found himself in the position that this God occupies in our religion. Then let us make a simple deduction, see what conclusion we shall draw from our hypothesis and ask if it is possible to come to any other. For thousands of years, all religions have let imagination run totally unrestrained—no limits fixed, “hog-wild”—and from these wild flights have come the dogmas that have been tossed into the hopper that spewed out our religions. So why should not we be entitled to just a small flight in fancy?

Let us imagine that we have never heard of a heaven, a hell or a Creator; that we are leading a simple, uncomplicated and all-around satisfactory existence here. Then one day we learn that a great scientist, on a vast, uninhabited island, has suddenly discovered the secret of creation and that he is beginning to create human beings in great numbers. We follow his work very closely for his creations may turn out to be unfriendly and hostile. We soon learn that he is distributing them, with little regard for their welfare or happiness, all over his domain, to work for him. Some have been located in areas where living produces few hardships—where food is easily produced and the climate is ideal—where there is no overcrowding, and no reason for one man to encroach upon his neighbor for the daily necessities of life. But in other locations, to merely exist is a task that draws upon the last bit of energy possessed by even the most robust. Those areas are simply overcrowded and there just aren't enough of the bare necessities of life to go around—(everything typical of over-all conditions in the present-day world).

Then the great scientist calls all his lieutenants together in council and fully briefs them on what is expected of them and

those he has placed under their commands. "I have been very kind and thoughtful in breathing the breath of life into you, and the hordes over whom I have given you jurisdiction," he says. "In return I am asking of you very little; all I demand is that you follow, with unquestioning and submissive obedience, the rules and regulations which I shall impose upon you. You shall see to it that all those whom I have placed under your command shall be kept constantly aware of what they owe to me, and that it is I to whom they are indebted for being created. You shall assure them that in return for unquestioning faith in me I shall reward them handsomely. With these things constantly in mind they shall serve me the better. But anything that shall tend to destroy harmony among your commands, and operate to curtail production, such as assault upon one another, thieving or murder, shall bring down fast, sure and severe punishment."

He hesitates for a moment to give his words time to cow and intimidate the boldest, for these people are not all of the same will to resist oppression; some are docile and easily driven while others are capable of great resistance. Nor are any two of these creatures of exactly the same pattern; some are intelligent, others stupid; some are resourceful, others shiftless; some have evolved naturally kind and incapable of inflicting misery or suffering upon a neighbor, while others are cruel, selfish and grasping.

Then the great scientist continues: "I am placing you and your commands on a probation of three score years and ten. If at the end of that time you have worked faithfully and obeyed all the laws which I have enjoined upon you, I will reward and promote you to another island where conditions are more ideal and you will be relieved of all the painful tasks that are going to confront you here.

"But any of you who fail me here shall be transported to yet another island where you shall find nothing but eternal,

burning sand; a place where you shall know nothing but the searing rays of the sun which have dried up every drop of water in the land, so that you will not find even a drop to quench your consuming thirst. And remember that I shall permit you no release through extinction because you shall live forever."

"But, Sir; that seems scarcely fair," ventures one of the lieutenants who has the welfare of his people at heart. "So many people have been located in my territory that they are badly overcrowded. Climatic conditions are severe and to produce even enough food to assuage the pangs of hunger is almost beyond their ability. And these workers you have assigned to me seem to be of an inferior quality, and there is even now every temptation for them to steal from one another. Other supervisors have much better conditions under which their commands work and live. I don't think it would be fair to impose the punishment you have described upon my people when the same tasks may be performed so much more easily by others."

"I have no intention of discussing such matters with you," the great scientist snaps, "I am the personification of kindness and justice; my laws, though inflexible, are just and they shall be obeyed by the least privileged as strictly as by those who your inferences suggest are more fortunate. Just remember that my justice and kindness apply alike to one and all and that, on the other hand, any infraction of my laws shall bring the same punishment—alike to one and all."

Because we live outside the jurisdiction of this scientist and need have no fear of incurring his wrath, he is the subject of open, unprejudiced discussion. What are some of the frank opinions that people express concerning this monster?

"An excellent character for the part of the fiend in our horror thrillers," one writer decides.

"The most sadistic monster of all time," another says. "He

didn't ask these wretches if they wanted to come here, particularly those he placed in such unspeakable surroundings."

"If he had given them all the same reasoning power and the same physical bodies, and given them all equal tasks to perform, punishment for non-performance would not seem so terribly unjust," another observes, "but under no condition whatever would he, even then, be justified in decreeing such terrible punishment for even a day, much less forever."

"But if they were all made equal in every way, and had then been placed in identical environments, they would have all turned out the same—all good or all bad," another points out.

And so the discussions and editorials went, but never a good word was said of this scientist-creator.

The reader has not failed to notice the analogy between the scientist's domain and the Christian heaven and hell, nor to see in the scientist himself the person, character and philosophy of the orthodox Christian God.

It should be crystal-clear to anybody with anything but the most shriveled mind, that it is beyond the power of puny man to injure a creator who can control the course of the universe, much less injure him to the extent where he should decree eternal torture as the punishment. Only the worst of pagan religions knew such gods. I wonder if the theologian has ever lived whose reasoning power, or mental faculties, were not too completely atrophied for it to have occurred to him, at some time, that what Christ suffered on the cross would be exactly nothing when compared with what the soul committed to the Christian hell would endure. There his cross would not be thought of in terms of hours or even years—or millions of years—but in infinity in time.

The North American Indian had a good place after death. Buddhism at least gives a man an unlimited number of chances to improve his lot through reincarnation. Some very intelligent

peoples of the past thought death meant utter obliteration; that after death here it would be "exactly as if one had never been born." And it is where we should least expect to find him, that we do meet this sadistic, vengeful god—the God of Abraham, Christianity and Islam. In the person of the scientist, we have seen Him stripped of His cloak of thousands of years of superstition and pagan beliefs and dogmas.

As man becomes more enlightened and rids himself of superstitious and pagan fears, He will have to go, or the only alternative will be atheism, and I for one never want to live in a world so completely materialistic that I should never meet another, who has not at some time stood all alone on a mountain top and watched the sun disappear in a blaze of transcendent glory and "felt" another presence—the presence of an intelligent and kind, but *consonant*, Creator.

True Christianity, if it had survived, could have given the entire world that peace of mind for which it so earnestly prays, but true *Christianity never survived*.

If I recall correctly, it was Soren Kierkegaard, Danish philosopher and poet, and a very capable and energetic student of Christian philosophy, who, after he had observed that the word 'Christianity' is so thoughtlessly and carelessly used (as we have already pointed out), told the people of his country that the Christian church was giving them a "life of paganism" because the orthodox Christian churches are "trying to make a fool out of God." He was on the right track, as more and more people are coming to realize every day, but I am going to rearrange the wording of his "conclusions and findings," and instead of saying that Christian churches are trying to make a fool out of God, say the churches are trying to make God out of a fool—this Jehovah of ancient Hebrew paganism, this monstrosity of contradictions.

Christianity is merely this ancient paganism with another

facet added. We absorbed it "lock, stock and barrel"; all except the early and revolting sacrifices to Jehovah, which the Christian church would brazenly tell us were discontinued and rendered unnecessary because of the sacrifice of Christ himself—(to Jehovah?).

The truth is, that by the time Christ arrived the Jewish people had already reached a state of civilization that had almost eliminated this loathsome pleasure of Jehovah from their religion. We shall go into the practice of "sacrificing" later.

The Bible

We shall consider the Bible only briefly, as we have already shown that one cannot get through the first book without being asked to swallow as ridiculous stories as are to be found anywhere, in the most imaginative of ancient mythologies, or in the modern popular fairy tales.

Most Christians seem to have the firm conviction that nowhere have stories or plots like those in the Bible, ever appeared except in the Bible. They couldn't be more wrong. As one reads translations from the sacred writings of Babylon and Egypt, one cannot fail to realize that, long before the Bible was written, the Hebrews were reading almost identical stories which originated in Babylonia or Egypt. Christians will point out that the ancient Egyptians recognized many gods. True, but actually there was usually a supreme god who was pretty much the counterpart of the Christian God. Actually the Christian has three Gods, for Father, Son and Holy Ghost are, it is universally agreed, three distinct and separate individuals.

Philip Van Ness Myers, great authority on Egyptian history and religion, says, "According to the Egyptologist Budge the ideas of God that were held by the learned among the early Egyptians were almost the same as those held much later by the

first Hebrew teachers." How about this Egyptian inscription written long before the appearance of the Hebrew Bible: "God is a spirit and no man hath known His form; He is the one living and true God; He has existed from the beginning and He is life; He is the creator of the heavens and the earth and all that therein is. . . ." And yet people will wonder where the Hebrew writers of the Bible got their "inspiration" after their long sojourn among these Egyptians.

The kindly old lady who sits down in her easy chair in the quiet of the evening and opens her Bible to enjoy that "comforting thought," probably has no conception whatever of the God worshipped by her stern, pious and intolerant next-door neighbor whose favorite religious adjunct is hell-fire and brimstone. He is so righteous that he need never have anything to fear. As she turns to the same passage she has turned to a hundred times before, the spectre of the God of that bigoted minister of the gospel, Cotton Mather (See page 43), never arises before her eyes. Nor has the God of the first seventeen centuries of the Christian church ever raised His incongruous head.

So actually there are a million different Gods worshipped in the United States today. Each person, in his own mind, to a considerable extent creates his own God. But whether the Bible be read by the kindly old lady, or by her bigoted neighbor, or by that man of God, Cotton Mather, there is one religious phenomenon they all share in common—they all read with an inexorably closed mind. They either consciously or unconsciously follow the stern admonition of Luther when he said, "Strangle reason like a dangerous beast if it dare question Scripture." (Calvin also demanded "unqualified submission of reason to the authority of Scripture.")

Thus, thoroughly conditioned from the cradle on, they are totally incapable of noticing the most monstrous absurdity, much less questioning it. They are not sufficiently removed in time

from the thinking and heritage of their forebears, who knew that to openly question any story in the Bible could bring down upon them the most fiendish physical torture for their heresy. Even if the thought were entertained in privacy it would bring them a place in the eternal fire of hell.

The first chapter of the Bible is a day-by-day progress report of God's labor while creating the earth, and if this report had declared that God hung by his toes from a star as He worked, the statement would never be questioned; reason would be "strangled like a dangerous beast." The reader would fail to notice that there were no stars (or sun or moon) until the fourth day. Actually, I have never known an avid reader of the Bible who ever gave a thought to the conditions under which God worked for the first three days when there was no sun or moon, or stars. He would be working in total darkness and with the temperature at absolute zero, when even oxygen would be in solid form. Yet on the third day the earth brought forth grass and herbs and fruit trees which God saw "were good." This story—as well told as it is—could, with a little revision to remove some of the absurdities, make a delightful addition to an edition of Anderson's *Fairy Tales*.

Now, not all the stories in the Bible can be considered as complete nonsense, any more than the story of Cinderella should be so considered. They can take one into the harmless land of make-believe and provide the few moments release from the cares of the day that so many people need, just as they have always needed them. If a childish, or even mature mind, can get a thrill out of reading about how the handsome prince came to the rescue of the distressed Cinderella, why could it not find it equally entertaining to read of how the prince led the oppressed Israelites to the Red Sea and had the waters part to provide a dry escape route, after which he had them close in over the chariots of the wicked pharaoh? But why ask the reader to be such an imbecile as to believe either?

And why ask an intelligent person to believe that only recently, as geological time goes, "the Lord," in His wrath, laid a sheet of water more than five miles thick over the entire earth to destroy all animal life which He had "repented of making." This would be several times the volume of water that is in all the oceans combined and would be in addition to all the water in the oceans because that sheet of water would be laid upon the oceans as well as upon the dry land. Or why ask him to believe that the first rainbow appeared immediately following the removal of this water from the environs of this planet, which is the same as asking him to believe that before that time, light didn't follow the present physical law of breaking up into its various colors.

Nor are all the writings in the Bible to be classed as fairy tales. Many are beautiful songs, similar to those that appear in the holy books of other religions. Others are of historic value to give us an idea of how the people lived in those early days. Others may enable us to understand what climatic changes have come about in parts of the "Bible land," and so on, but the "bibles" of other great religions serve the same purpose.

If a person walked blindfolded into a book store and picked out a score of books at random, he would likely find, when he came to examine them, that he had some truly inspirational works. He would find he had others that could be classified only as entertaining. Others would be just trash and still others would fall under the classification of pornography.

From the authors whose writings go to make up the composite Bible, we find all those classifications represented. Some stout defenders of the Bible admit that there are beautiful writings in the holy books of other religions but they insist that the greatest are mediocre, when compared with the least in the Christian Bible. I am not going to take the space to reproduce some of the fine writings from other "bibles," but shall copy one small "gem" by that paragon of wisdom, Solomon, which

appears in the Christian Bible, (Songs of Solomon 7:1-5);

(1) How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter!
the joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of
a cunning workman.

(2) Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor:
thy belly is like a heap of wheat, set about with lilies.

(3) Thy breasts are like two young roes that are twins.

I shall leave it to the reader whether this "beautiful" song is divinely inspired or whether it is just plain slop.

Now let me tell a story which, if it were sent through the mails, would be considered obscene, lascivious and licentious pornography:

Once upon a time, in a city called Sodom, two "angels" were observed walking on the street one evening, and a man by the name of Lot, who stood very high in the favor of God, happened to see them. Noticing that they appeared to be weary, he arose from his chair on the porch and went to meet them. When within speaking distance he "bowed with his face toward the ground" and invited them to spend the evening in his home. "Enter into your servants' house," he invited, "and in the morning, after a good sleep and a warm shower, you'll feel much refreshed and be able to continue on your way."

The two gentlemen hesitated to impose upon Lot's hospitality, but Lot was a very kind, just and God-fearing man (as you shall presently see) and would not take "No" for an answer. And when Lot promised to provide a real feast, the two found themselves unable to resist and they accompanied Lot to his home where, as good as his word, he prepared a tempting repast of which the two strangers partook with gusto.

But when they were about to retire, a bunch of Sodom's hooligans and juvenile delinquents gathered in front of Lot's house and demanded that he toss the two strangers out so that they could make sport of them.

Now, in those days there was little a man wouldn't do to

protect any stranger who had accepted hospitality under his roof, and Lot was no exception. Lot noted that the mob consisted of "young and old," and the toughest elements that could be collected in that city of degeneration and lust, so he said, "Now, boys, I pray you don't be so wicked. I'll make a bargain with you. I have two virgin daughters and if you do nothing unto these men, I'll bring my daughters out and give them to you and you may do with them as you wish." (Genesis 19:8).

Well, that sounded reasonable to men of that type, so they took the two daughters and the men inside spent the evening in comparative security, and after thanking Lot the following morning, departed feeling much refreshed.

I'll have to plead guilty to plagiarism in the writing of the foregoing story. I copied it (but faithfully) from that great book, the Bible. You may read it exactly as it appears above, but in greater detail, if you will turn to chapter 19 of the book of Genesis.

Now, as we have said, Lot stood high in the favor of the Lord because of the exemplary life he lived, and the truth of this becomes evident when God became "fed up" with the wickedness of Sodom and showered "fire and brimstone" upon it. Of all the residents, He spared only Lot and his two daughters (who apparently survived their experience with the mob), and the three left the city and lived in a cave.

They lived for a long time in the cave because Lot became old there. Now it happens that the two daughters dreaded to think that there would be no sons to continue their father's line because there were only the three of them left in the entire land, so they decided to take upon themselves the responsibility of supplying such progeny.

And so they got the old boy skunk-drunk. We'll skip over the period of the next nine months or so, and turn to the book of Genesis, chapter 19, verses 37-38.

37. And the firstborn bare a son, and called his name Moab: the same is the father of the Moabites* to this day.

38. And the younger, she also bare a son . . . the same is the father of the children of Ammon* to this day.

(Anyone desiring greater detail than appears above may read the entire chapter 19 of the book of Genesis.)

There is never anything at all to be gained by discussing anything with the hard-headed "believer" (who would be afraid to read this book, anyway), who has just enough mental capacity to open his mouth and repeat for the n^{th} time, "Well, if it is in the Bible it's true and is the 'way of God'." But I cannot help wondering if he would follow this "way of God" and toss two daughters to the human wolves to save the hides of a couple of strangers. Or does he, perhaps, select this chapter from the "great" book, when he chooses a bedtime thriller to read to his young offspring, rather than an episode from that "unbelievable" story of Cinderella and the Glass Slipper?

And so, without further comment, we leave this "holy" guide, realizing that there can be nothing so fantastically absurd that it will not be believed by somebody, almost anytime.

* When the Hebrew tribes were reduced to obedience and welded into a real empire under King David, he had to wage a war of extermination against these two troublesome tribes.

The Tree Called Sacrifice

RECORDED HISTORY may go back some five thousand years, but history was in the making countless thousands of years before that. The big difference between the periods—prior to and subsequent to the inventions for recording events—is that we do not know the names of the outstanding leaders of those prehistoric periods, nor the methods they employed to direct the energies of their people. All that we know about peoples prior to the first crude attempt at writing is what we can learn from archaeological exploration. But we do know that thousands of years before recorded history begins, all the continents of the world were populated, even if sparsely, and even if those populations were little superior mentally to the beasts they hunted for food.

We might mention three facts about these peoples that archaeological explorations confirm. The “kitchen middens” (dating from paleolithic to modern times) confirm the fact that they required food the same as we do today; remains of fires in ancient caverns tell us that they sought shelter from the elements just as we do today; and the remains of crude sacrificial altars tell us that the most primitive human creature concerned himself with religion, no matter how revolting may have been the forms he used to express his religious beliefs. These ancient creatures lived in a world that represented nothing but conflict and dangers—danger from the wild beasts and the elements and, more to be dreaded, dangers from the spirits that controlled the lightning and the thunder, torrential floods, pain and sickness, and so on. The sabre-toothed tiger might be fearsome enough, but the limited mental capacity of the primitive human

was sufficient to enable him to outwit it and construct barriers against it—and even kill it—but he had no way of combating the more fearsome invisible spirits, and so religions were born.

It is quite plain that these pitiful wretches were less concerned with offering thanks to these demoniac spirits than with offering gifts and sacrifices to appease them. There was little to thank them for, but it was clearly necessary to do everything to prevent the visitations of their wrath for some act which may have displeased them, and to keep on friendly terms with them (be a chosen people) by the frequent offering of gifts—often in the form of food for which the spirits (that later became gods) showed a preference.

Among the most primitive races, it seems difficult to draw a sharp dividing line between gifts and sacrifices, but as nations became more civilized, the distinction became quite clear. The Romans came to distinguish between the two by calling one by the name of *hostia honoraria* and the other *hostia piacularis*—both names, however, admitting of the element of sacrifice. The first type of sacrifice, which assumed more the form of a gift, was offered by the worshipper to maintain a relationship of friendly dependence upon the god—to keep his good will. The second type was offered to appease divine wrath or expiate some sin. The more uncivilized savages do not seem to have been very conscious of sin, so that their sacrifices were made to appease divine wrath and invariably demanded a life, preferably a human life. They are the sacrifices that, throughout all history, have been the most revolting and savage. Consciousness of sin came later and the ancient Hebrews seem to have sacrificed to expiate sin as much as for any other reason.

It remained for the Christian church, however, to make indispensable the piacular sacrifice, for under Christendom a person doesn't need to sin; he is already "born in sin" (see page 55), so that to this day this type of sacrifice is easily discernible in the Christian church, especially in the Roman Cath-

olic mass in which the consecrated wafer, believed to be the "body of Christ" is offered as a piacular sacrifice.

Countless volumes have been written on the subject of "sacrifice" and a conscientious study and unbiased reading of these works, into which has gone so much intensive research, will do more to trace clearly the development of religion than any other investigation one could make, for all religions in their infancy revolved around sacrifice of the most revolutive nature.

A dozen books the size of this one would only "scratch the surface" on this subject so we can no more than mention the hundreds of human victims who might be burned to death in wicker cages by the ancient Celts during one sacrificial offering, or the rivers of human blood that flowed off the stone altars of the Mayas, or the revolting human sacrifices of the Dahomans that were not stamped out until this century—if indeed they have been completely abandoned even yet in the more inaccessible parts of that people's country.

And what has all this to do with Christianity? As we said a few pages back, Christianity took over the old Hebrew religion, "lock, stock and barrel." Its God is the Jehovah of the ancient Hebrews. Abraham, Isaac, Lot, Solomon, and Moses, are the holy men of the Christian church, whose lives are held up as shining and perfect examples for us to follow—which, fortunately, we don't. The Christian church is as much the house of Abraham as is the synagogue, even if its ritualistic form of worship is different.

By the time Moses had come on the scene, possibly some fourteen hundred years before Christ, the religion of the Hebrews had developed into a truly national religion, but the core of it was still in the bloody sacrifice. How far it had advanced beyond the human sacrifice can be guessed by the story of Abraham's willingness to offer his son upon the altar and plunge home the sacrificial knife with his own hand. In the land of his birth, before migrating to the Holy Land, it is almost

certain that he should know about human sacrifices by his forebears, especially those sacrifices to the old Semitic god, Moloch, to whom fathers frequently offered their own children as the highest type of sacrifice. Few early peoples had more faith in the efficacy of blood than the Hebrews. Just as a solution of salt water, which has been blessed by the Christian priest, is used by some religions today to ward off misfortune or evil, or to bring good luck and sundry other blessings, so blood from a sacrificial animal was used by the Hebrews. The blood from the sin offering was applied to the horns of the altar and smeared on the doors of the homes of the faithful. The Carthaginians daubed their altars with the blood of a sacrificed tribesman.

Blood! Blood! Blood! And more blood! Religion has bathed in and wallowed in blood since the first cringing savage plunged his stone knife into the bosom of his child and held the mutilated form on high as a sacrifice to appease the fearsome lightning god who, in his voice—thunder—was declaring his mighty wrath in the darkness of the night. The stench of sacrificial blood is still sweet in the nostrils of the devil as he sits on his throne in hell.

Long after the day of Abraham, different peoples began showing a tendency to abandon the custom that called for such wanton slaughter, and they began to use blood from a victim without actually slaying it. An example is the flogging of Spartan boys at the altar of Artemis. The Romans did still better, for they came to the place where they made complete substitution. Where a sacrifice had once been a human being, dough dolls were accepted by the gods as they were thrown into the Tiber at the time of the annual atoning sacrifice.

But the blood sacrifice remained with the Hebrews as long as with the Romans or Greeks and that it was fully approved of by God, and was most acceptable to Him, was manifest when Elijah, to expose the prophets of Baal, built a stone altar and slaughtered a bullock and laid it upon the altar and then

called upon God to ignite the fuel laid under the carcass. "Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice" (1 Kings 8:38). The early chapters of the Bible are full of specific directions for conducting sacrifices, and to indicate the magnitude of some of these offerings, we should mention the dedication of Solomon's temple (which lasted for seven days during which the "glory of Jehovah filled the house of the true God"), when King Solomon sacrificed 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep.

But by the time Christ arrived on the earth, the bloody sacrifice was pretty well on its way out, among both the Jews and the Romans, and if Christ had not come to make the "supreme sacrifice" it would have completely vanished anyway, just as it has in all countries where civilization has continued to make any progress.

Nevertheless, it is abundantly clear that these sacrifices were not only acceptable to God, but that He demanded them and outlined the forms the rituals were to take.

Now if these sacrifices were acceptable two or three thousand years ago, any intelligent or curious person is to be excused for asking why they suddenly became unacceptable and why, as the Christian church tells us, God decided to terminate them by offering His Son as a final substitute. (We refer you to the references already made to the sacrifices to the Semitic Moloch where fathers sacrificed their own sons). Why does the "blood of bulls and goats" no longer suffice to atone for our sins? Did people suddenly become so much more wicked that it was found that a more potent and precious blood—the blood of Christ himself—was required to do the old job? Nonsense, of course. The truth is that these sacrifices were in no way different from the revolting human sacrifices to the Semitic god, Moloch—who was worshipped in Abraham's fatherland—except that they substituted beasts for human beings. They were made

for the same reasons—reasons for which an intelligent, compassionate Creator could not help but abhor.

Bloody sacrifice to atone for sin, or to glorify or cultivate the favor of a god is the most debased of savage, pagan worship. Anybody who thinks that the spilling of blood, of man or beast, has any place in the worship of a worthy Creator, should have been born into some ancient Scythian or Phrygian home where he could have had a bellyful of it. If the Christian church were not so largely pagan in its worship and beliefs today, the "blood" of Christ would have no more part in it than would the human blood that drenched the stone altars of the Mayas. Nor would we have the "Christian" songs that sound as if they had been composed in a slaughter house, as the composer sucked on his opium pipe, as for example the verses: "Are you washed in the blood, in the soul-cleansing blood of the Lamb," "The blood of Jesus cleanses white as snow," etc., etc.; or a pagan prayer such as the one (copied just as it was delivered in a Christian church) which appears on page 22 of this book.

One can excuse a great nuclear physicist for not being erudite in the field of ethnology, for example, but he could not be excused for being a common fool. One can excuse a professing Christian for not being erudite in the field of religious history; for not having the slightest knowledge of how religions evolved or metamorphosed, but neither can *he* be excused for being a common fool, and he can be little else when he believes in the efficacy of bloody, piacular sacrifice.

As the Romans became more enlightened, they made dolls out of dough and other substances, as we have already observed, and offered them where a bloody sacrifice had been formerly required. The Christian church substituted the sacrifice of Christ for the bloody holocaust of the Jews. Today it makes further substitution by giving us wine as "the blood of Christ," as it

makes its piacular sacrifice. "This is my blood," the priest intones, as he passes the wine of which the communicant will partake.

For the student who has made a study of even this one indispensable element of all religions—sacrifice—the whole story of the growth of all religions, from the human sacrifice by the pagan through the mass in the Christian church, unrolls step by step, in unbroken continuity, with all the clarity of the finest educational film.

The Trees Called Miracles

BEFORE WE GET INTO THIS SUBJECT let us try a little exercise in mental gymnastics, such as a psychologist might use to determine whether one had a ratable I.Q. Let us write down the words:

Rubber Tire, Wheel,
Klaxon, Motometer, Windshield Wiper,
Steering Wheel,

and then ask what all these words have in common. One doesn't need an I.Q. of 180 to notice that they all presently are, or at one time were, used to identify indispensable parts of an automobile.

Now let us take the words:

Sacrifice, Ritual,
Charm, Amulet, Talisman, Icon,
Vision, Ghost, Spirit, Demon, Devil,
Miracle, Witchcraft, Sorcery, Magic.

One still doesn't need a high I.Q. to notice that, one and all, these things either presently are, or at one time were, indispensable elements of religion. Even today, A.D. 1960, most of them are as plainly visible in the Christian church as is the cross atop the bell tower.

The Christian Bible, from beginning to end, is almost a continuous story of bloody sacrifice, rituals, charms and amulets; icons, ghosts and demons; miracles and witchcraft. This doesn't mean that these elements were always objects of worship. Wicked gods, for example, have never been worshipped in any religion even if, out of fear, they might be sacrificed to. Neither are the devil, nor demons nor witches worshipped in the

Christian church; but they are there, full life-size, just the same. Much of the New Testament is given to recounting the "casting out" of devils and demons. Every epileptic or idiot was possessed of devils and it should be noted that Christ Himself never left us a single letter or record detailing how He cast out devils. These things are considered miracles and were concocted and told by overzealous eager beavers exactly as similar miracles were manufactured for Buddha or Zoroaster after their deaths.

As men become more enlightened and illiteracy decreases and superstitions begin to fade, most of these elements of religion are pushed into the background and the emphasis is placed more upon ritual, so that in the more enlightened countries there is a tendency to treat the most unbelievable of these stories as allegorical tales.

Let us review the story that St. Matthew told about Christ casting the devils out of two evil men, and locating them in a herd of swine (Matt. 9:28-32).

28. And when He (Jesus) was come to the other side into the country of the Georgescenes there met him two possessed of devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way

30. And there was a good way off from them a herd of many swine feeding

31. So the devils besought Him (Jesus) saying, "If Thou cast us out, suffer us to go into the herd of swine."

(Now in those days bushes talked; serpents talked; demons talked; jackasses talked (Numbers 22:28-30)—all verified in the Bible. So these devils, if they were going to be dispossessed were able to tell Christ where they would like to relocate, and their request was granted.)

32. And He said to them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and behold, the whole herd of swine ran down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the water.

I suppose it would be an anti-climax to expect Matthew to tell us if the devils also perished—if indeed he knew. However, I have never heard of this particular story being considered as allegorical by the “faithful” reader who sees real devils come out of two evil men and take up their abode in many swine (there must have been several devils in each man) that immediately run violently down a steep place to destruction. Told in the holy book of any other religion, this story would be laughed to scorn by any Christian. Whether any really educated man can swallow such rubbish I am unable to say; I know I have never known one who could. This story is in no way superior to those told and believed by the lowest type of savages as, for example, the aboriginal Tasmanian who believes that great pain in his body is caused by a demon who has taken up his abode there and is consuming his liver. Some Malayan tribes say that one kind of demon is causing small-pox while an entirely different demon causes a different disease. These savages use every device imaginable to “cast out” these demons; the beating of drums near the sufferer’s bed sometimes suffices. In other cases great cunning is required and resorted to to outwit the demon.

Until very recently, demons were considered as seriously in the Christian church as they were by savage tribes. In the early Christian church the demoniacs formed a special group of afflicted persons who were placed under the control of an ecclesiastical order of exorcists.* It took Christian theologians many centuries to abandon this primitive theory of demons

* Webster’s definition of “exorcist”: “Roman Catholic church and Eastern churches. A member of a minor order, which is next below that of acolyte. In the R.C. church it is the third of the minor orders; in the Eastern church the order has practically ceased to exist.”

“EXORCISE—*v.t.*; To expel or drive off (an evil spirit) by adjuration, especially by the use of holy names, or, loosely, by magic rites. Hence to deliver (a person, place, etc.) from the presence, or purify from the influence of an evil spirit.”

causing diseases such as epilepsy, *delirium tremens*, lunacy, etc. There is even now available a documented account of one of the last cases of the "casting out of demons"—*Exorcism*, to use the technical religious term—in England. One, George Lukins, (now thought to have been an epileptic) had seven devils exorcised on June 13, 1788. A team of seven clergymen, according to the history of the case, did the job. The record doesn't say whether this was a free-for-all, no-holds-barred, seven-clergy-against-seven-demons brawl, or whether each clergyman was particularly skilled in handling one particular type of demon and "took on" only the type he knew how best to handle.

In a papal bull (edict) of Pope Innocent VIII, the proper method of punishing one guilty of "consorting with demons" brought the most fiendish torture and death to many thousands of so-called witches. It seems to have been women, almost entirely, who "consorted" with demons in those early days. This is because "such things come more natural to women than to men because of the inherent wickedness in their hearts." (Please do not impute this conclusion to the author of this book; he is merely quoting the infallible church as it expressed itself in the famous work, *Malleus Maleficarum* [*Hexenhammer*], which outlined the proper procedure in witchcraft cases, especially in Germany. Refer reign of Pope Innocent VIII). To Pope Sixtus IV, however, is usually ascribed the honor (?) of being the first to institute trials for witchcraft within the Catholic church. In later times, this example spread far beyond the bounds of Roman Catholicism.

In the year 1727 (which is quite recent), an exorcist by the name of Jerome Mengo published, with the approval of the church, a regular exorcist's manual on how to get rid of "those cunning demons who hide in the bodies of men and vex them with diseases," and which are likely to take refuge "in the patient's hair" when expelled.

A very learned Jesuit of the same time, by the name of

Martin Delrio, seems to have been about ready to crawl out of the stinking slime of religious superstition, for he was ready to agree with the new belief of the more enlightened physicians of the day that men could be afflicted with epilepsy or lunacy without being obsessed of demons, but he still insisted, however, that those victims afforded "the most likely places" for the demons to take up their abode, especially lunatics at the full of the moon "when the brains are full of humors" (melancholy or black bile).

Ugh!

The reader should stop for a moment and try to visualize this function of the Christian church which, as time goes, only yesterday was one of its most important and busiest offices. He is not reading a gruesome piece of fiction, composed by a mentally sick writer of horror thrillers whose warped brain is capable of conjuring up a picture of a sadistic and fiendish jungle savage slowly torturing to death his victim, shackled to a tree; he is reading about the real-life priests and clergy of the Christian church. The fiction writer may give us a grim and violent picture of some degenerate slowly torturing an unfortunate victim who has fallen into his clutches but his warped mind seldom thinks of putting thousands of these sadists into one story; to find that situation we must come back to reality. Not just one fiend but thousands were employed by the Christian church.

The demons in the victims were not "searched out" by a kindly and understanding physician; these clergy frequently applied the most fiendish physical torture to the victim to locate the demon and the torture was frequently applied several times to the same victim. The victim might succumb to the torture before the demon was located, and if the demon could not be located and "exorcised," the victim would finally be chained to the iron stake in the public square and slowly burned to death as a public spectacle.

The present walls of all the old European Christian cathedrals could, if they could speak, tell thousands of stories of a kind that would keep the entire degenerate element of our society spellbound for the rest of their lives . . . and there would not be a single word of fiction in any story; they would be wholly true, eyewitness accounts—true stories of the “infallible” Christian church.

Now if there were demons hiding in men’s bodies as late as two hundred years ago, of which the Christian church was cognizant and which had to be “cast out” (exorcised), there are still demons hiding in men’s bodies and medicine and science have slipped back deplorably in not being able to recognize them as the Holy Office was so efficiently able to do. On the other hand, if we agree with modern medicine and science and the beliefs of even moderately enlightened men, that such demons do not now exist, then there were no demons hiding in men’s bodies two hundred years ago, nor two thousand years ago. Can any intelligent man reason otherwise?

Then if there were no demons floating about two thousand years ago, entering men’s bodies to “vex them with diseases,” then a flock of demons did not “come out” of the two “exceeding fierce” men from the tombs and the whole story rightfully belongs with identical stories of miracles performed by Buddha and Zoroaster and, in fact, the voodoo medicine man.

And if the thoroughly indoctrinated “faithful” reader of the Bible (who, so far as religious matters are concerned, hasn’t a single belief or idea in his head that is actually his own, that wasn’t handed down to him) believes that demons by the thousands were cast out of men in Bible days and that demons were “come out” of the two fierce men, then he believes in demons. It is as simple as that. And if he believes in demons he is as gullible and unenlightened, religiously, as the Tasmanian savage of seventy-five years ago.

But let us get down to miracles of A.D. 1959: “And there came

to the temple, to be prayed for, a minister of the gospel, who was in a wheel chair and paralyzed from the waist down because he had become possessed of a devil.

"And in the temple they prayed for him; and when they had prayed for him, behold, the devil departed out of him and he arose from his wheelchair and walked as any other man." (The radio hour of St. Francis could build a very entertaining half-hour drama around this "miracle.")

No, in spite of the phraseology, this miracle is not recorded in the Bible. If the reader will turn to page 31 of this book he will find the first reference to it and discover that it was described in a Sunday morning sermon by a minister of the gospel, who has a large following that is growing by leaps and bounds. Miracles, charms, amulets, witchcraft, and shadows on slum walls and church spires still find eager buyers among millions of gullible, fanatical and superstitious Americans.

As we said, when we first described this "miracle," we do not question Dr. Wyatt's word. We are ready to believe that the stricken man "rose from his wheel chair and walked as any other man" but the "miracle" has no place in religion any more than the same miracle when performed by the witch doctor in darkest Africa.

A wise and observing physician may give an hysterical woman a sugar pill and tell her that it is very potent and that in five or ten minutes she should feel "much better." If the doctor has made no mistake in judging the type he is dealing with, she will, in five or ten minutes be experiencing blessed relief. Every experienced physician has effected this "miracle" but he doesn't try to build a religion around it. Nor does he believe that he has 'cast out a demon.'

Let us consider the following letter. The author has documentary proof that it presently is, or recently was in the files of that rapidly-growing organization, "Wings of Healing." The letter from a grateful member reads:

About a year ago I had a cancer. The doctors wanted to keep me at the hospital, but I said, "Not now." On the way home I mailed a handkerchief to "Wings of Healing" to be anointed. When it was returned three days later, I was completely cured. Soon after that my eyes started to bother me, so I had them checked. The doctor said I had cataracts, and would need an operation. I had to get glasses, but instead of wearing them, I sent them to you to anoint, and before they got back my eyes were healed. I never had to wear the glasses.

The devout Catholic may sniff contemptuously at the thought of the "anointed" handkerchief and spectacles, but the next day he will bring home some "anointed" salt water to sprinkle on his child who is running a high fever. Completely enlightened and emancipated men are saddened at the thought of either.

What, then, really is the difference between these charms: the sacrificial blood of Old Testament days that was sprinkled on the door posts to ward off disaster from Jewish homes; the sacrificial blood of the Carthaginian tribesman which was used in identical manner; the blood from the veins of an unborn hyena pup smeared on the forehead of a tribesman by the African witch doctor; the anointed handkerchief that cured cancer; the holy water that the Spanish fisherman must sprinkle on his boat before he leaves port; the mystic charm worn around the neck of the voodoo to ward off harm and prosper him in love; the image of Christ on the dashboard of the "Christian" owner's automobile? The mention of this last-named amulet is brought to mind by the sight of a badly-wrecked automobile that was towed off the road a few years ago and on the dashboard of which still stood a molded image of the Christ. This fetish revealed its having exactly the same value as the puma's claw worn around the neck of the Haitian voodoo because it is invested with supernatural power. This residue, left from the blackest days of man's history, analyzes the same wherever it is found.

Time has a way (and it may be just as well) of coating over

enough of the slime that nations and religions have wallowed in, so that any current generation can see only halos above their own country or religion. We in the United States are presently in no great need of new lands or raw resources so, treaty-wise, our hands are lily white. Only the other nations break treaties. We prefer to avoid recalling the ruthlessness with which we dispossessed the red man, or the sacred treaties that we made with him and brutally broke, with never a qualm, the moment we wished further to encroach upon him. The best we can do to justify those actions is to say, "Well, we were no worse than any other nation that became rich and powerful."

The Christian church is in exactly the same position; the best we can do for it is to say, "Well, it is no worse than other religions that became rich and powerful," and we shall forget the vast wealth that it has extorted, through treachery and torture, from those who refused to conform in the fourteenth, fifteenth, or sixteenth centuries, for example. We'll forget the thousands upon thousands of hapless wretches that its courts turned over to the professional torturer to be mutilated or burned at the stake. We'll forget the penances, which were often worse than death, that it imposed upon countless thousands of others to expiate supposed heresies. We'll forget such sights as the stone platform close to Seville, Spain, in the archbishopric of Seville, on which two thousand victims of ecclesiastical bigotry were burned alive in a single year. (The Jesuit historian, Mariana, supplies this figure.)

But only the most unenlightened, deluded and gullible dupe will see the halo.

Inquisition

DURING THIS YEAR, the "Religious Information Bureau" of the Roman Catholic church has spent considerable money trying to speed up the time-healing process that might cover up the odium that attaches to its association with the Inquisition. The church seems to go on the assumption that if the church itself releases some "information," the gullible reader, either too lazy or too incompetent to do any research for himself or too thoroughly indoctrinated to dare question, will swallow the bait and say, "If the church says so it must be so." Nothing could possibly be any further from the truth. In such matters this church has not changed one iota from the fourteenth or fifteenth century church.

According to the latest church version of the operation of the Inquisition, "it was the butler who done it." Its hands are clean and totally uncontaminated. If it were not for these ridiculous claims which cannot possibly be made in good faith, this chapter would not be added to this book.

In the United States today, the police cannot come in the middle of the night and take a man from his home and confine him in a filthy dungeon where he would be denied contact of any description with the outside world or his family, because he had expressed disbelief in some church dogma. In fact no court in the United States could, or would, sustain any action for disbelief in, or exposure of any or every dogma of any church.

But such a condition did not exist anywhere in Catholic Europe in the fourteenth, fifteenth or sixteenth centuries, where the Roman Catholic church was all-powerful and could make

or unmake kings and empires. We have no ecclesiastical court in the United States, but in that time the ecclesiastical court was almost the supreme authority in the average man's world in Europe. The church *was* the state. Nearly every crime of which the average man would be likely to be accused in a lifetime would be tried in this church court. *All* crimes involving "heresy" were adjusted by the church court with the frightful punishment prescribed. It is true that it was usually against the policy of the church to "shed blood," so when the punishment meted out by its court was "burning at the stake," the church turned its victims over to the secular arm of the law for the actual torture. (For example, an edict by Pope Innocent IV directed that heretics should be tortured by the civil power as "murderers of the soul and thieves of the sacrament of God.") But this action usually followed the application of barbarous torture to first secure the admission of guilt. On rare occasions, after months of intermittent torture by mutilation and racking, the suspect might be cleared of guilt and allowed to slink home, perhaps to die an early death because of the torture he had endured, but there was no recourse to the church for damage.

It must be remembered that the crime for the suppression of which the Inquisition was organized was not murder, theft or treason; it was heresy, a crime handled exclusively and entirely by the church court. The average American can form no conception of how powerful the church was in, say, the fifteenth century, nor what hell it was to live under its jurisdiction. That powerful pope Alexander VI, in the year 1493, by a scratch of his pen divided the new world between Spain and Portugal. This infamous decree, called the Bull of Demarcation, awarded Spain everything west of a meridian running close to the Azores, and upon the strength of this decree that country claimed both the continents of North and South America and all the off-shore islands. (This same pope, incidentally, was the father of that villainous pair of scoundrels, Lucrezia and

Cesare Borgia—a fact which I am sure the Religious Information Bureau is not going to bring to your attention; a fact which I'll venture, very few Catholics and perhaps few priests know). However, we shall not here go into such things as the life of the nefarious Cesare Borgia (who was immediately elevated to the rank of cardinal by his pope-father), and his evil influence in the church; we are concerned only with making clear how powerful was the church when the Inquisition was at its evil worst.

Let us copy the definition given in Webster's unabridged dictionary for the word "Inquisition":

Inquisition—Roman Catholic church. A court or tribunal for the *discovery*, examination and *punishment* of heretics. The general tribunal (officially called the Holy Office) for suppression of heresy was developed under Innocent III (Pope 1198–1216) and Gregory IX (Pope 1227–41). Its operations were chiefly confined to Spain, Portugal and their dependencies, and part of Italy. The Spanish Inquisition, as reorganized and put under state control toward the end of the fifteenth century, in the sixteenth century conducted its proceedings with notorious cruelty. The Inquisition was abolished in France in 1772 and in Spain, finally, in 1834. The congregation of the Holy Office still exists, its chief concern now being with heretical writing. (*Italics mine.*)

As Webster says, the Inquisition was officially known as the Holy Office. All authoritative works use that term and we shall so use it hereafter.

Before we go further, we might point out to any bigoted Protestant who might be inclined to gloat over this chapter, that the Protestant church was "tarred with the same brush." It does have a defence against the first few hundred years' operation of the Holy Office in that there was no Protestant church, but in the early days of the Reformation, the Protestants burned their heretics with as little compunction as the Catholics burned theirs. Protestant barbarisms did not run into anything like the vast numbers perpetrated by the Catholic church, but

there can be little difference between the fiend who murders a dozen people in cold blood and the one who so murders a thousand. The English historian, George W. Kitchin, has written: "If men feel safe, they charitably wish others to be also safe—hence missionary heroisms; they fear whatever may endanger their safety, and long to clear it away—hence persecutions; they argue that if they make a convert they save a soul, and if not that the stiff unbeliever is too dangerous to be left at large—whence comes imprisonment and burning at the stake."

The wisdom of these statements cannot be denied. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the Catholic church was riding high—arrogant and ruthless—on the crest of abysmal ignorance and diabolical superstition, but signs of disquiet and threats of resistance were beginning to show, and these threats to dictatorial authority spawned the Holy Office (Inquisition). These were the real dark ages, some of the very blackest in man's entire history. These were the days when the hordes of Genghis Khan were setting the torch to all of Asia; when a city like Peking could be utterly destroyed with every man, woman and child being butchered.

But those were also the days when the Pope felt that his power and influence were greater than that of a prince or a king in Europe and he had no intention of relinquishing any of that power. To indicate to what lengths the church would go to keep people enslaved, and in what fear it was held by the superstitious—from wretched serf to monarch—we shall go to England in the years 1213–15.

In this trip back to the thirteenth century we shall see how a pope might dictate to a king and also what attitude he would assume toward people who really showed a will to resist—a desire to gain some freedom. In 1208 the Catholic Archbishop of Canterbury died and a successor was named by King John. The pope (Innocent III) resented this high-handed action by the English king and, instead of King John's choice, consecrated

one Stephen Langton, (well-known in English history) as the archbishop and ordered King John to accept him. King John, in turn, resented this interference in English affairs and refused Langton and dispatched a threatening letter to the pope. After years of bickering, the pope resolved to force his will upon John, and laid all England under an interdict and excommunicated John. It then becomes immediately clear that even an English king, in those dark days, could fear a curse, or "hex," just as much as a voodoo worshipper does in this day because John accepted Langton. He restored the rich properties he had confiscated from the clergy and monks and delivered his kingdom to the pope and received it back as a fief of the papacy. (About the first official act to be performed by Langton, after John accepted him as bishop, was to pronounce absolution of the excommunication of John.)

A few years later, in 1215, the English people rose up in arms and forced King John to sign what is one of the most remarkable documents of all time, the Great Charter (Magna Charta). It was remarkable because, up to that time, people had almost always accepted oppression and autocratic rule as the natural order of things.

This remarkable charter provided that "no free man shall be taken, imprisoned or damaged, but by the judgment of his peers or by the law of the land."

How was this attempt to secure a little freedom viewed by the church? The charter was the very antithesis of the Holy Office and the pope immediately declared it null and void and excommunicated all the English leaders who were instrumental in securing it. He ordered Langton, (whom he might be justified in considering his stooge) to publish the excommunication order, but Langton refused and was removed from his bishopric.

These facts of history are given so that the reader may more readily understand how such a fiendish and vicious organization as the Holy Office could ever exist at all, much less for so long.

There isn't an educated person living in the United States today, Catholic or Protestant, who, had he lived in the fourteenth, fifteenth or sixteenth centuries in Catholic Europe, and been foolhardy enough to express many of the beliefs which he now holds, would not have found himself facing the inquisitors of the Holy Office. If he would have been fortunate enough to avoid the stake, he would have had forced upon him penance not much more to be desired.

When the word "Inquisition" is mentioned the average person is likely to say, "Yes, I've heard of the Spanish Inquisition," or "I know about the Spanish Inquisition." . . . if he only did!

It was in Spain that the Holy Office in the sixteenth century achieved the ultimate in its loathsome existence. The Nazi horror chambers in the last war, in which so many Jews were exterminated, were pink teas compared with the Holy Office in the sixteenth century. The Nazi fiends are at least supposed to have more or less mercifully killed their victims before tossing them into the crematories, but the fiends of the Holy Office saw to it that their victims were slowly burned alive so that they might completely atone for their heresies. Additional torture, which we shall not mention, could be inflicted even as the victim slowly burned to death while shackled to the iron stake.

The Spanish Inquisition proper had its beginning in 1480 and was established at Seville. The inquisitors were all of the Dominican order of the Roman Catholic church, which in those days gave the church many of its popes. The Jesuit historian, Mariana, tells us that more than two thousand victims were burned in the archbishopric of Seville and the bishopric of Cadiz in the next couple of years. But the Holy Office goes back three hundred years before that. In the year 1184 the synod of Verona laid a curse on all heretics and their shelters and ordered that they be turned over to the secular arm to be put to death and that their property be confiscated. From

that date the operation of the Holy Office became, year after year, more bestial.

In the year 1215, St. Dominic devised a scheme to have a new order of preaching friars formed, whose special function would be the searching out (discovery) of heresies, and this scheme was approved by Pope Innocent III that year and confirmed the following year by Pope Honorius III. Besides his vicious preaching friars, St. Dominic (who organized the Dominican order of the church and was one of the most brutal of all the inquisitors) established an order called the "Militia of Christ" (Fiends of Hell would have described them perfectly), but later known as the "Familiars of the Holy Office." Evidently the organization of these satanic orders brought him sainthood in the church. From that period on we find the inquisitorial duties entrusted almost entirely to the Dominican monks. From their tribunals there could be no appeal even to the local bishops, all having to be directed to Rome alone. In 1263, Pope Urban IV, in order to expedite the appeals to Rome, appointed inquisitor-generals to be the mediums of communication between the pope and the inquisitors.

It was in Spain, however, that the Holy Office seems to have had its most active life. A work left by the inquisitor general of Castile in 1356, one N. Eymerich, gives a very full account of how the Holy Office operated. It describes the spy system, quite similar to that used by the gestapo in Hitler's Germany, by which heresies were searched out. It describes the secrecy with which proceedings were conducted; how the accused could have no contact whatever with the outside world, and the mockery of having in one organization both accuser and judge. It shows how it was to the advantage of the tribunal to bring a verdict of guilty against the accused, as such a verdict confirmed the inquisitor's own orthodoxy and at the same time secured to the Holy Office the wealth of the victim.

But in Spain the Holy Office also had its most difficult task,

though at the same time the most remunerative. There it was not dealing with simple-hearted peasants and artisans as it did in France, Germany or The Netherlands. In Spain it had to contend with the crafty, wealthy and resourceful Jews and the highly-intelligent Moors, both of whom loathed the worship of virgins, saints and images—things that to them were idolatries.

There is no reason why we should take many pages here to go into the legal procedure followed by the tribunal as it obtained convictions and great wealth to swell both the papal and state treasuries. We are interested only in showing that the Inquisition was one hundred percent the instrument of the Roman Catholic church.

In Italy, in the sixteenth century, one Michele Ghislier has been called "the very soul of the Inquisition" in that country, and he eventually ascended to the Pontifical throne as Pope Pius V.

In Portugal the Holy Office assumed about as vicious a form as it did in Spain. We would suggest that the reader turn to page 3 and review the footnote there.

The Holy Office probably received its real death-blow from Napoleon, who crushed it wherever he came across it. After his banishment it did revive to a certain extent, but its fangs had been extracted and about all it could show was its ugly and murderous desires. About the last act credited to it is the burning of a Jew in Spain in 1826.

Pope Pius IX, in the year 1865 of his exceedingly tempestuous reign, during which the temporal power of the papacy came to an end, issued an anathema against Freemasons, "the secular foes of the Holy Office." With the occupation of Rome in 1870, both the pope and the Inquisition retired to and were confined to the Vatican.

One of the most fiendish beasts of the blackest epoch of man's existence upon this earth, the Christian church wears a different mask today, but it professes to pray to the same God

to whose ears, only yesterday, the screams of the tortured were such sweet music. It approaches Him today through the same rituals and the same dogmas. It exists today because of the astronomical wealth that it has been able to direct into the greatest propaganda campaign of all time, which has been able to scrape off some of the filthy barnacles that clung to its hulk through so many centuries. It exists because the most fantastic falsehood or distortion can be impressed upon the childish brain just as readily as can the most profound truth, to remain there unchallenged until one makes the almost superhuman effort of thinking for one's self.

These are facts against which there can be no defense. I'll leave to grandiose theology such questions as whether the body of Mary has returned to dust in some forgotten earthly grave or whether it was taken up to heaven (whatever and wherever that may be—or whatever storage facilities they may have there), because such questions have no more bearing on the future welfare of the human race than does the question of whether Santa Claus lives at the North Pole or the South Pole. But I will, from here out, always insist that I have the inalienable right to think for myself, and the same right to refuse to accept anything that common sense, freed from superstition, would instantly reject.

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